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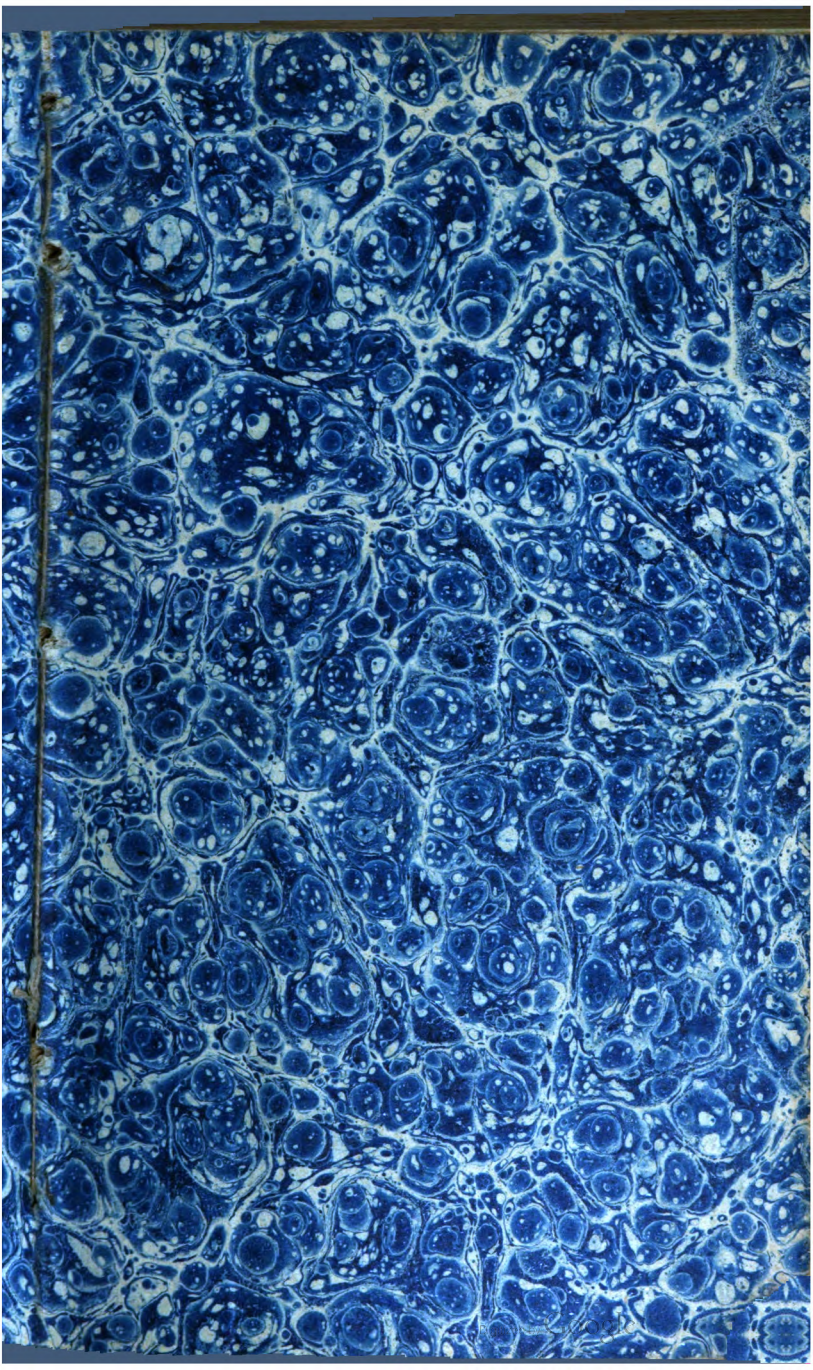
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60 - CHANTILLY





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CONSIDERATIONS

UPON

~~DEPOSIT~~  
CHRISTIAN TRUTHS AND CHRISTIAN  
DUTIES,

DIGESTED INTO

# MEDITATIONS

FOR

EVERY DAY IN THE YEAR.

By the Ven. and Rt. Rev.

DR. CHALLONER, Bp. OF DEBRA, V. A.

PHIL.

Let 100 copies  
VOL. II:

60 FROM JULY 1, TO DECEMBER 31

TH.

“Blessed is the man—whose will is in the law of the Lord, and he shall meditate on his law by day and night.

“And he shall be like a tree, which is planted near the running waters, which shall bring forth its fruit in due season.

“And his leaf shall not fall off, and all whatsoever he shall do, shall prosper.”

*Psalm i. 1, 2, 3.*

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# CONSIDERATIONS

UPON

CHRISTIAN TRUTHS AND CHRISTIAN DUTIES,

OR

MEDITATIONS for every Day in the Year.

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## *On Time and Eternity.*

July 1. **C**ONSIDER first, how precious a thing time is, which we are so apt to squander away, as if it were of no value. Time is the measure of our lives: therefore as much as we lose of our time, so much of our lives is absolutely lost. All our time is given us in order to our employing it in the service of our maker; and by that means securing to our souls a happy eternity; and there is not one moment of it, in which we may not labour for an eternity; and in which we may not store up for ourselves a treasure for an eternity: so that, as many as we lose of these precious moments, they are so many lost eternities. Our time is a talent, with which God has entrusted us; and of which he will one day demand of us a strict account, how we have spent every hour of it. Our salvation, or damnation for eternity, will depend upon the good or bad use of our time. Ah! how little do we think of this? How little do we think of the sins we are daily guilty of, in squandering away so much of this precious time?

Consider 2dly, how short is the whole time of this mortal life: a mere nothing compared with eternity: and how very quickly it passes away. When past, it is gone; it is no more; it leaves no footsteps behind it. Time to come is not ours: we cannot promise ourselves one moment of it. The present time is all we can call our own: and God only knows how long it will be so. It flies away in an instant; and when once it is gone, it cannot be called back. Our



hours, one after another, all pass away with precipitate haste into the vast gulph of eternity, and are swallowed up there, and then appear no more. The very moment in which we are reading this line, is just passing, never, never more to return. And as many of these hours, as many of these moments, as are once lost, are lost for ever: the loss is irreparable. Learn hence, O my soul, to set a just value upon thy present time: learn to husband it well, and employ it all to the best advantage.

Consider *sdly*, that as all time is short, and passes quickly away; so all the *temporal* enjoyments, of the honours, riches, and pleasures of this world, are of the like condition; they all pass away with time; they are all transitory, uncertain, and inconstant. Only eternity, and the goods or evils which it comprises, are truly great; as being without end, without change, without comparison; admitting of no mixture of evil in its goods, nor any alloy of comfort in its evils. O, how quickly does the glory of this world pass away! How very soon will all temporal grandeur, all worldly pride and state, all the riches and pleasures of worldlings, be buried in the coffin? A few short years are more than any one can promise himself: and after that, poor sinner, what will become of thee? Alas! the worms will prey upon thy body; and merciless devils on thy unrepenting soul! Thy worldly friends will all forget thee: the very stones, on which thou hast got thy name engraved, will not long out-live thee. O how true is that sentence: *vanity of vanities, and all is vanity, but to love God and to serve him alone!* Kempis.

Conclude to make such use of this present time, and of all temporary things, as to make them serviceable to thy soul in her journey towards eternity. But take care not to let thy heart cleave to them, by any disorderly affection, lest thou be entangled in them, and perish with them.

*On the Visitation of the blessed Virgin.*

July 2. **C**ONSIDER first, how the blessed Virgin, having now conceived in her womb the Son of God ; and having learnt from the Angel Gabriel that her kinswoman St. Elizabeth had also, by a miracle, conceived a son, in her old age, makes haste to visit her : and being now full of God herself, carries her treasure with her to the house of Zachary, to impart, out of the abundance of it, grace and sanctity, both to the mother and to the son. See, my soul, how the Son of God incarnate for us, whilst he is yet in his mother's womb, begins to communicate his graces, not only to his Blessed Mother herself, by elevating her soul daily more and more to a greater fulness of grace ; but also to John Baptist his forerunner, (by sanctifying him before he is born) and to holy St. Elizabeth, by filling her with the Holy Ghost ; and making his Blessed Mother the instrument of these his wonders. Give ear to the Gospel, (*Luke i. 39, &c.*) ' Mary rising up in ' those days, went into the hill country with haste, ' into a city of Juda. And she entered into the ' house of Zachary, and saluted Elizabeth. And it ' came to pass that when Elizabeth heard the saluta- ' tion of Mary, the infant leaped in her womb, and ' Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost ; and she ' cried out with a loud voice, and said : Blessed art ' thou among women ; and blessed is the fruit of thy ' womb. And whence is this to me, that the Mother ' of my Lord should come to me ? For behold as ' soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in my ' ears, the infant in my womb leaped for joy. And ' blessed art thou that hast believed, because those ' things shall be accomplished that were spoken to ' thee by the Lord, &c.' This visitation, so full of mysteries, and the source of many extraordinary graces, is honoured by the church in the festival of this day.

Consider 2dly, more in particular, the wonders of

this day's visit. See how at the first voice of the mother of God, by the all-powerful grace of him whom she bears in her womb, the Baptist is immediately cleansed from original sin : see how he is justified and sanctified in his mother's womb : see how the use of reason is advanced in him, and how, in that darksome prison, he is made sensible of the presence of the *true light, which enlighteneth every man that cometh into this world*: see with what ardour of devotion and love he is carried towards his Lord, and his sovereign Good; and leaps for joy at his presence; longing as it were to break forth from his confinement, and to go before him, and publish aloud to all the world: *Behold the Lamb of God! Behold he that taketh away the sin of the world!* John i. 29. But see also the wonderful lights, and extraordinary graces, that are communicated to St. Elizabeth by this visitation: see how she is filled with the Holy Ghost: see in how clear a manner the great mystery of the incarnation of the Son of God, with all its consequences and fruits, is revealed to her: what a sense she has of the high dignity of the Virgin Mother of God; and with what ardour of devotion she publishes aloud the sentiments of her soul, and glorifies both the Son and the mother; acknowledging herself unworthy of so great a favour as that of a visit from them. Bless the Lord, my soul, for all these wonders of his grace, and learn with what sentiments of devotion; with what faith; with what hope; with what humility; thou oughtest to draw near to this same Lord, on our altars, lying hid in the sacred mysteries. Learn also what extraordinary graces may be drawn from this inexhaustible source of all grace: as also how great the benefit is of his visiting mankind, by his *being made flesh, and dwelling amongst us*: and how powerful and effectual is the intercession of his Blessed Mother, for the procuring from him the greatest blessings to Christian souls.

Consider 3dly, how the soul of the Virgin Mother was affected upon this occasion. She has expressed

the sentiments of her heart in that admirable canticle she then pronounced. *My soul, saith she, doth magnify the Lord: and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. Because he hath regarded the humility of his handmaid: for behold from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. For he that is mighty hath done great things to me, and holy is his name, &c.* See, my soul, in these words, as well as in all the rest of that divine canticle, the wonderful sense this Blessed Virgin had of the infinite goodness and mercy of God, in the great work of the incarnation of his Son: her exceeding great joy in God, joined with love and praise on that occasion: her gratitude, for her having been freely chosen by the divine bounty to be the happy instrument of God, in effecting that admirable work: and her most profound humility, in ascribing nothing at all to herself; but giving all the glory to God; and for admiring his wonderful ways, in choosing for so great a work, so weak, so mean, so lowly an instrument, as she esteemed herself. Learn, O my soul, to imitate these her sentiments!

Conclude to give thanks to our Lord for all his wonders wrought at this visitation; and for the many visits with which he so frequently favours thee. Beware, lest any want of correspondence on thy part, deprive thee of thy share in the great blessings and graces which he usually imparts to such souls as give proper entertainment to his divine visits.

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*On the good Employment of Time.*

July 3. **C**ONSIDER first, how great a treasure time is; when well employed. Every hour of it is of far greater value than all the kingdoms of the earth: because in every hour of it, if well employed, we may purchase an eternal kingdom in heaven: but all the kingdoms of the earth put together, are not able to purchase for the dying sinner one hour of time, in his greatest want of it. Ah! it is then that sinners will begin to be convinced of the value of time, and of the infinite importance of em-

ploying it well, when they shall see themselves upon the brink of eternity, and when there shall be no more time for them. But O! what would not the damned in hell give for one of these hours? And how well would they employ it if it could be allowed them? But, alas! they would not work whilst the time was: whilst they had the day-light before them: and now the dismal and eternal night has overtaken them, in which there is no time to work; and in which they shall, with a bitter, but fruitless repentance, eternally condemn their past folly and madness, in misemploying and squandering away during life so much precious time O, Christians, let us learn to be wise at their expence!

Consider 2dly, the strict obligation incumbent upon us all of employing our whole time to the best advantage. Our time is not our own: it belongs to our Maker: it is lent us by our Lord and Master. The servant is strictly bound to employ his time in the service of his master: he is both an idle and a wicked servant, if, being hired to work, he spends his time in play. What must we then think of ourselves, if being made, and sent into this world, by our great Master, for nothing else but to spend the short time of our mortal life in serving him and doing his will, we squander it away in empty amusements, worldly diversions, and vanities; or in doing our own will, rather than his? Ah, Christians! deceive not yourselves: such a crying injustice as this calls to heaven for vengeance; the wasting and destroying so much of your Master's precious time (more precious by far than all the goods of the world) will never pass unpunished. If you are to be accountable for every idle word, how much more for every idle hour? O! reflect how much it cost your dear Redeemer to purchase for you this time. By sin you had forfeited your life, and consequently your time, and incurred the guilt of a double death: and whatsoever time God has allowed you, since your sin, has been purchased for you by the blood of Christ, in

order to your repentance and a new life. It has cost him an infinite price; it belongs to him: the alienating it from him is a robbery; it is a sacrilege; it is perverting to your greater damnation what he purchased for your salvation.

Consider 3dly, the immense treasures of grace, and the everlasting glory, that may be continually stored up by a good employment of time. There is not one moment of all the time of this mortal life, in which, if well employed, we may not purchase a new degree of eternal bliss: now every degree of eternal bliss is something infinitely more precious, and more desirable, than all the riches and all the kingdoms of the earth. What a loss it is then to lose any of these happy moments: it is losing so many immense and eternal treasures. A loss so great, that if the happy state of the blessed in heaven could admit of any such thing as grief, they would certainly regret, to all eternity, all those moments of the time of their mortal pilgrimage, which they had not employed to the best advantage: when they shall clearly see, in the light of God, what an immense increase of eternal glory and happiness they might have acquired, by the due employment of all those precious moments.

Conclude to have ever before thy eyes the infinite advantages that are to be found in employing well thy time, and the strict obligation thou hast of spending it all in the service of thy Maker: and this according to his ordinance, and agreeably to the end for which he sent thee hither, and for which he gives thee all thy time. And ever remember, that in his account, all that time will be considered as idly spent, and quite squandered away, that has not been dedicated to the doing his will.

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*On remembering our last Things.*

July 4. **C**ONSIDER first, those words of the wise man (*Eccles. vii. 40.*) *In all thy works remember thy last end, and thou shalt never sin: and reflect how true it is, that the memory of the four*

last things has a wonderful efficacy to restrain the soul from sin, and to take off the heart from the affections to it. The remembrance of death, the view of the grave, of the coffin, of the shroud, of the worms, and the maggots, and of the speedy corruption of this carcase of ours ; the serious and frequent consideration of the necessity of our quickly parting with all that we love in this world, and of our being forsaken and presently forgotten by all, must needs humble our pride and vain glory, abate our fondness for this world, and its deluding toys, check our sensual and carnal inclinations, and keep all our passions under. O ! *the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life*, can never endure the sight of the grave. But then when we look beyond the grave, and meditate at leisure on the strict account we must one day give to an all-wise, all-powerful, and most just judge, who cannot endure iniquity : when we consider that his eye is ever upon all our thoughts, words, and works, and that they are all to be weighed in the scales of his divine justice, and according as they are there found, we are to be rewarded or punished for endless ages, and to be either infinitely happy, or infinitely miserable ; how is it possible that in the midst of such considerations as these, we should dare to sin.

Consider 2dly, that the remembrance of the four last things wonderfully serves to correct the errors of worldlings, to open their eyes to truth, and to shut them to vanity. The transitory things of this world, its goods and its evils, as we call them, are apt to make a great impression on our poor souls, shut up as they are in this earthly prison. We take them for something ; we are fond of honour, riches, and pleasures, as if they were solid goods ; and we are afraid of contempt, poverty, and pain, as if they were real evils. But the meditating on our last end undeceives us ; it quickly convinces us that all is nothing that passes with time ; that nothing is truly great but what is eternal ; that those things deserve

not the name of *goods* that contribute nothing to make us either good here, or happy hereafter; and that those are no evils which help to bring us to an infinite *good*. In fine, as to all the false maxims of the world, and the prevailing opinions and practices of its unhappy slaves, and their abettors, this kind of consideration on the last things exposes the folly and madness of them all, and sets it in such a light, as to determine the soul to adhere no longer to such perverse and erroneous notions as will certainly be changed in death, condemned at the last judgment, and, if not recalled in time, punished in hell for all eternity.

Consider 3dly, the manifold fruits which have been heretofore and are daily produced by the serious consideration of the four last things. Even the most hardened sinners have often been converted from their wicked ways to a penitential life, by the terror of those thundering truths, death, judgment, hell, eternity. The preaching, the reading, and meditating on these truths, has sent numbers into desarts, or religious houses, there to secure their eternal salvation by a saintly life: and such considerations as these have generally laid the first foundation even to the most eminent sanctity. O what lessons may we not learn among the silent monuments of the dead, who made some noise heretofore in the world, but now are thought of no more! What lectures, what instructions, what exhortations, may we not daily receive, by attending in spirit at the trials of the great bar; by going down, while we are alive, into the darksome dungeons below, and viewing at leisure what is doing there; and by ascending up into heaven, and contemplating those happy mansions of eternal bliss, prepared for the reward of the momentary labours and sufferings of the servants of God? O let us daily frequent these schools.

Conclude to make it thy practice to think often on these important subjects, which so nearly concern thy everlasting welfare. It will be a sovereign means



to prevent an unprovided *death*: it will teach thee to be always in readiness for *judgment*: it will keep thee out of *hell*, and bring thee to *heaven*.

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*On the Certainty of Death.*

July 5. **C**ONSIDER first, that there is nothing more certain than death. *It is appointed for all men once to die, and after that judgment,* Heb. ix. 27. The sentence is general: it is pronounced upon all the children of Adam, *Eccles. xli. 5.* Neither riches, nor dignity, nor strength, nor wisdom, nor all the power of the world, can exempt any one from this common doom. From the first moment of our birth we are hastening towards our death; every moment brings us nearer to it. The day will come when we shall never see the night: or the night will come when the sun will rise no more to us. The day will most certainly come, when thou, my soul, who art reading these lines, must bid a long farewell to this cheating world, and to all thou hast admired therein, and even to thy own body, the individual companion of thy life, and take thy journey to another country, a strange and unknown land to thee: where all thou settest a value on here will appear as smoke. O learn then to despise all these perishable things, and to set thy heart on nothing, since all must be taken away by death.

Consider 2dly, that death is not only certain, but generally speaking, much nigher than we imagine. If ever we look upon death, it is generally with the wrong end of the perspective glass, that removes the object to a great distance, when indeed it is very near. We are apt to flatter ourselves, with the worldling in the gospel, (*Luke xii.*) with the expectation of many years enjoyment of our worldly goods and pleasures; and when we least of all suspect it, we are called away: we must suddenly be gone. *Thou fool,* saith our Lord, *this night do they require thy soul of thee; and whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?* Thousands are dying, this very

*On the Uncertainty of the Time of our Death.* 13

hour, throughout the world; and perhaps not one of them all but expected to have lived many more years. We daily hear of sudden deaths; we daily hear of young and strong people carried off by short sicknesses, in the very flower of their age: and why will we deceive ourselves? why will we vainly imagine ourselves out of the reach of these arrows of death, that are falling so thick on all sides of us? *Ah! fool, why dost thou think to live long, when thou art not sure of one day?* Kempis.

Consider 3dly, the wretched blindness and stupidity of mortals that think so little of death, and live as if they were to be always here: and by this means expose themselves every day to the dreadful danger of dying in their sins. And yet alas! all this while they cannot be ignorant that death is continually following them at their heels: they even carry it about with them in the frail composition of their mortal frame. All the things about them, by their continual fading, remind them of their mortality. They daily see or hear of deaths or burials, or meet with the monuments of the dead, who, from their silent tombs cease not to admonish them, in the words of the wise man, (*Ecclus. xxxviii.*) *Remember my judgment: for thine also shall be so: yesterday for me, and to-day for thee.* O, my soul, do thou at least give ear to this admonition: keep death always before thy eyes, and when it comes thou shalt have nothing to fear.

Conclude, since thou must quickly be gone from hence, to set thy house now in order, and to make all necessary provisions for that long journey which thou must shortly take: and ever strive to be such in life as thou desirest to be found in death.

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*On the Uncertainty of the Time and Manner of our Death.*

July 6. **C**ONSIDER first, that death is the passage from time to eternity. If we die well, it will be well with us for all eternity: but if

we die ill, it will be ill with us for endless ages: so that upon this one moment of death, depends a long eternity. But when shall this moment come? when shall we die? Shall it be this night, or to-morrow? Shall it be a week, a month, a year hence, &c.? Oh! of this we know nothing at all, only that it will be when we least look for it. For our Lord has assured us, that he shall come like a thief in the night; that is, when we least think on it, *Luke xii.* And therefore he tell us, we must always *watch*, and always be *ready*: for if we are surprised, and die in our sins, we are lost for ever.

Consider 2dly, that we are not only wholly ignorant of the time of our death, but also of all other circumstances relating to it. We neither know the place where we shall die, nor the manner how we shall die; nor whether our death shall be violent or natural, by fever or consumption, gentle or sharp, of quick dispatch or more lingering, at home or abroad; whether our last illness shall deprive us of our senses or no; whether we shall have the assistance of our ghostly father, and the helps of the sacraments, or no; what dispositions our souls shall then be in; or what ability we shall then have, to make proper use of those last moments, upon which our all depends, for eternity. Alas! all these things are quite hidden from us: no wit, no learning, no wisdom upon earth, can help any man to the knowledge of any one of these things. O let this dreadful uncertainty of all the particulars that relate to our death, determine us to live always in the expectation, and preparation for death: that we may not have that great work to do, at a time, when we shall have no convenience or ability to do it.

Consider 3dly, that death being so certain, and the time and manner of it so uncertain, it would be no small satisfaction to a poor sinner, if he could die more than once; so that if he had the misfortune once to die ill, he might repair the fault, by taking more care a second time. But alas! we can die but

once : and when once we have set our foot within the gates of eternity, there is no coming back : and if it be a miserable eternity, into which we have stept, there is no redemption : we pass from death to a second death, to the very extremity of misery, without end or remedy. O how hard it is to do that well, which we can do but once, and can never try or practise beforehand ! O my soul, see then thou take care to study well this important lesson, by a continual preparation for death.

Conclude to make it the great business of thy life to learn to die well. Remember there is no security against an evil death but a good life : every thing else leaves thee exposed to dreadful uncertainties.

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*On preparing for Death.*

July 7. **C**ONSIDER first, that the preparing for death is a business of the utmost importance : it is the great business of life. We came into this world, as pilgrims and travellers, to make the best of our way towards our true and everlasting home, a happy eternity. The great business of our whole life, is to secure this happy eternity ; and nothing else can secure it but a good death. This is the necessary gate, through which we must pass to eternal life ; if we think of arriving at it, by any other way, we shall miss the road. A good death then must be the study and business of our whole life : our whole life ought to be a preparation for it. Happy they who are continually preparing for it by a good life ! Unhappy they who defer their preparation to their death-bed ; and thereby put the issue of an eternity upon the poor chance of a death-bed performance !

Consider 2dly, the great but general error of men, who promise themselves to do great things in point of devotion or contrition, when they are sick and like to die ; and upon the confidence of this, are often careless in preparing for death, during the time of their health. Alas ! how strangely will they one

day find themselves deceived ! For if a small pain, or indisposition, be enough at any time to spoil all our devotion, what must a mortal illness be, when either the dulness and stupidity caused by the distemper, or the anguish of body and mind, scarce allow of any application at all of our thoughts to the greatest of all our concerns ? O my soul, see thou suffer not thyself to be thus imposed upon. Do now all thou art able ; prepare thyself now for thy last end, by daily and fervent acts of devotion and contrition ; every night strive to put thyself in the condition, in which thou desirest to be found at thy death : but never tempt God, by designing to live in sin ; and then to die in grace ; or by expecting so extraordinary a miracle of grace, as to pass from being a slave all thy life-time to sin and Satan, to the loving God above all things, at thy death. No, no, *God is not to be mocked* in this manner.

Consider 3dly, that the best manner of preparing for death, is to die daily, to our sinful inclinations and passions ; to the love of the world, and of the flesh, and to our own unhappy self-love, the root of all other evils ; and this by the means of a general mortification and self-denial. This is that great lesson, perpetually inculcated by the Son of God in the gospel, of leaving all to follow him, of disengaging our hearts from all things else, of renouncing our dearest affections for his sake, of denying and hating ourselves in this world, that so we may save our souls, and possess our God for ever in the world to come. O how sweet, how happy, how secure, shall our death be, if it finds us thus untied from the earth, and all earthly clogs ! O how shall we then long for the wings of the dove, to fly away from this land of misery and sin, and to repose eternally in God.

Conclude to be ever preparing thyself for death ; by refraining from all that thou wouldst then wish not to have done ; and by living every day, and doing every work, as if it were to be the last of thy life : and thou shalt not fail to die happily.

*On the Sentiments we shall have at the Hour of our Death.*

July 8. **C**ONSIDER, first, how different a judgment the soul will make of all things at the approaches of death, from that which she is apt to make in life : O how shall the world then turn upside down before her eyes ! Ah ! my soul, how wilt thou then despise all worldly honours and preferments, when thou shalt see thyself at the brink of the grave, where the worms shall make no distinction between the king and the beggar ! How little account wilt thou then make of the praise, esteem, or love of men, who will now think no more of thee ! How wilt thou then undervalue thy riches, when thou shalt see them slipping away from thee, and leaving thee nothing but a coffin and a shroud ! How contemptible shall all wordly pleasures then appear in thy eyes, which at the best could never afford thee any true satisfaction, and now shall shew what they really are, and dissolve into smoke ! O let us make the same judgment now concerning all these things, as we shall do then ! Let us weigh them all in these scales, and we shall not be cheated. For why should we set our affections upon such short-lived slippery toys ? Why should we admit of a love, that cannot stand the test of death ?

Consider 2dly, O my soul, what shall then be thy sentiments with regard to thy sins ; of which perhaps thou hast hitherto made but small account ? O how hideous, how odious, will they begin to appear to thee, how numerous, how enormous, when the curtain shall begin to be withdrawn, with which thy busy self-love has industriously hidden them, or disguised the deformity and malice of them ; and they shall be set before thy eyes in their true light : when that false conscience, which thou hast framed to thyself, and under the cover of which thou hast passed over many things in thy confessions as slight and

inconsiderable, which thou wast ashamed to declare, or unwilling to forsake, shall no longer be able to maintain its ground, at the approach of death? O what anguish! What remorse! What dread! What confusion! What despair will invade a poor dying sinner, at the sight of this dreadful scene, of this army of his sins drawn up in battle array against him! Ah! Christians, let us be wise in time, and prevent so great an evil, by taking all such precautions now, with regard to our sins, as we shall certainly wish to have taken then.

Consider 3dly, my soul, what thy sentiments shall be, at the time of thy death, with relation to the service of God, to virtue, and devotion. O how lovely then shall the way of virtue appear to thee! O how wilt thou then wish to have always followed that charming path! But what shall thy sentiments be with regard to the value of *grace*? How bitterly shalt thou then regret the neglect of so many calls and invitations of thy gracious God; the loss of so many favourable opportunities of storing up eternal treasures; the squandering away so much of thy precious time; the misemploying so many of God's gifts and talents; the abuse of the sacraments, &c. Ah! how many great, but ungrateful truths, shall then discover themselves to the sinner, against which he had shut his eyes before! How shall the false reasonings of the world, the delusions of his passions, the subtleties of his self-love, together with the affected ignorance of such things as he had no mind to know, all forsake him at the approaches of death, and leave him in the lurch, at the time of his greatest distress?

Conclude to enter into these sentiments now, with regard to all these things, that shall stand by thee at the hour of thy death. For why shouldst thou any longer suffer thyself to be the dupe of the world, the flesh, and the devil; and give into their impostures, with evident danger of the eternal loss of thy immortal soul.

*On the Death of the just Man.*

July 9. **C**ONSIDER first, these words of the Royal Prophet, *Ps. cxv. Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints.* And reflect how true it is, that the death of such as have served God in good earnest, is indeed both precious in the sight of God, and edifying in the eyes of men; because of those happy dispositions with which they meet death: especially that faith and confidence, which they have in the goodness and mercies of their heavenly Father, and in the infinite merits of Jesus Christ their Redeemer; and that perfect conformity to the divine will; accompanied with a profound humility, a deep sense of the sorrow for sin, and an ardent love of God, with which they close their eyes, and yield up their souls into their Creator's hands. O what a happiness it is for a dying man to be in these dispositions! With what willingness does such a Christian as this leave this world! What peace and tranquillity does he find in his soul, from the testimony of a good conscience! How joyfully does he fling himself into the arms of his tender Father, who, he is well assured, will never reject his loving children, that cast their whole care upon him! *O let my soul die the death of the just, and let my last end be like to theirs, Numb. xxiii. 10.*

Consider 2dly, what a comfort it is to a good man, at the approaches of death, to see himself now so near to the end of all his labours, of all the miseries of this wretched life, and of all those dangerous conflicts and temptations, to which he has hitherto been exposed, from those mortal enemies of his soul, the world, the flesh, and the devil; and to find himself just upon the point of being delivered from his long prison, from *the body of this death, from the servitude of corruption, and from sin that surroundeth him* on all sides, in this vale of tears; and of being called home from his banishment, to his true country,



which he has always longed for. O what a satisfaction it is to a lover of God, to see himself now at the gates of the heavenly Jerusalem, where he is to see, love, and enjoy his God for ever! What a pleasure, to look forward into that blessed eternity, into which he is just now entering, and to sing with the Psalmist, (*Ps. cxxi.*) *I rejoice at the things that are said to me: we shall go into the house of the Lord. O blessed are they that dwell in thy house, O Lord, they shall praise thee for ever and ever, Ps. lxxxiii.* To such souls as these, when they are near their death, these words of our divine Saviour are directed, *Luke xxi. 28. Look up, and lift up your heads, because your redemption is at hand.*

Consider 3dly, the particular providence of God, in favour of his servants at their death, expressed by the prophet (*Ps. xl. 4.*) in those words: *The Lord helps them on the bed of their sorrow, he turns all their couch for them in their sickness.* He restrains their enemy at that time, he mitigates their fears and apprehensions, he supports them under their pains and agonies, he encourages them against the terrors of death and judgment, he protects them in that critical hour under the shadow of his wings, that they may be able to say with the Psalmist, (*Ps. xxii.*) *Though I should walk in the midst of the shadow of death, I will fear no evils, for thou art with me.* In fine, he never forsakes them in death, who in their life have been faithful to him; but more particularly helps them then, when they stand most in need of his assistance, and when all the world besides forsakes them. O blessed be his goodness for ever!

Conclude, if thou desirest to die the death of the just, to live the life of the just, and to do the works of the just: for such as thy works are during life, such will thy death also be. *Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord. From henceforth now, saith the Spirit, they may rest from their labours, for their*

*works follow them*, Revel. xiv. 13. See then that thy *works* be such, as may make thy life holy : and thy death shall not fail to be happy.

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On the Death of the Wicked.

July 10. **C**ONSIDER first, that as nothing is more desirable than the death of the just man, by which he puts a happy conclusion to all the labours and miseries of this dying life, which we are leading here below, and enters into the never-ending joys of the Lord : so on the other hand, nothing can be conceived more wretched, more dismal and deplorable, than the death of the wicked. *The death of the wicked is very evil*, saith the Holy Ghost, Ps. xxxiii. 22. It is *very evil* indeed, as often as they are unexpectedly hurried away in their sins, and go down in a moment into hell : it is *very evil* also as often as they die hard, and with little or no sense of God, or eternity. But supposing neither the one nor the other to be the case, the death of the wicked is still *very evil* ; from the torture of their conscience, from the sense of present misery, and the dreadful apprehension of a miserable eternity : and whatever way they look, all things seem to conspire against them ; to denounce the judgments of God to them ; and to set before their eyes a dismal scene of woe : ah ! how feelingly do they now experience that of the psalm, (cxiv.) *The sorrows of death have encompassed me, and the perils of hell have found me ?*

Consider 2dly, more in particular, the principal ingredients of this bitter cup, which the wicked, that will not think during life, are so often constrained to drink of in death. And first, the remembrance of their past sins, appearing now quite in other colours, than they had represented them to themselves before ; all staring them now in the face in their most ugly shapes, and with their united forces making a vehement assault upon them, to push them down headlong into the bottomless pit of despair. O how gladly would the dying sinner rid himself now of this

odious company ! What would he not give, to shake off from his breast this viper's brood of his own offspring ! But all in vain, they will not be shaken off. O how sensibly do they make him feel the gripes of their gnawing ; not unlike those of that never-dying worm, which is one of the worst of the torments of hell ! Then the remembrance of the graces they have so long resisted ; of the opportunities of good, they have so often neglected ; of the talents they have buried ; of the time they have squandered away, (one hour of which they cannot now recall, though they would give ten thousand worlds for it ; ) of their past abuses of the sacraments, of the word of God, and of prayer, those great means of salvation ; and the little good they can find in their whole lives, to put in the scales against so much evil ; must add very much to their unspeakable anguish and distress ; coming in upon them at this sad time, when they have so little presence of mind, so little leisure, opportunity or ability, of doing any thing themselves ; and have too much reason to apprehend that God has forsaken them.

Consider 3dly, what anguish it is also to the dying sinner, to see himself violently torn away from all those things he had set his heart upon in this world. *O cruel death*, shall he then say, *dost thou make so bitter a separation ?* 1 Sam. xv. 32. What sad farewells will he be then constrained to bid to his honours, riches, pleasures, and all other worldly enjoyments ; to his friends, kindred, house and family, together with the whole world ; and his own body too, in order to depart into an unknown country, and to take nothing with him thither but his works, which he would gladly leave behind him : O how does the sight of all about him, his wife, his children, and his worldly goods, which he has loved more than his God, now serve for nothing but to increase his misery ? And if, to change the melancholy scene, he endeavours to divert his thoughts from the remembrance of his past extravagances,

and present miseries, and to look forward, he meets there with still more frightful objects, from the just apprehension of what shall follow after death; what hands he shall fall into then; what a severe trial he must immediately go through; and what the sad consequence must be, if he be there cast. Alas! he sees himself just now launching forth, with all his evils, into eternity, an immense ocean, to whose further shore the poor sailor can never reach; and which he has too much reason to fear, will be to him an eternity of wo.

Conclude to lead a virtuous life, and thou shalt have no share in this dismal scene of evils, which attends the death of the wicked.

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*On the Condition of the Body after Death.*

July 11. **C**ONSIDER first, that the soul is no sooner departed from the body, but this wretched carcass, which she leaves behind, immediately becomes pale, stiff, loathsome, and frightful: insomuch that the dearest friends of the deceased can scarce endure to watch one night in the same room with it, and would not be induced by any consideration to lie in the same bed. Even the greatest beauties are now turned ugly and hideous; and their former admirers can no longer bear the sight of them. O ye children of men, how long will you be fond of these painted dunghills! We read that St. Francis Borgia was so touched with the ghastly countenance of the corpse of the Empress Isabella, (whom he had seen a little while before in all her majesty, and all her charms) seeing the strange change that death had so suddenly wrought in her, that he conceived upon the spot an eternal disgust for this world, and a happy resolution of wholly consecrating himself to the love and service of that great King, that never dies. O that the like consideration of the dismal change that death shall so quickly make in all mortal beauties, might effectually move us to the like resolution.

Consider 2dly, that a person is no sooner dead, but the body begins to corrupt and stink : and in a very short time it becomes so insupportable, that surviving friends are obliged to make haste to get it out of the house, and lay it deep under ground, that it may not infect the air. And were the grave, after some weeks, to be opened again, and this carcass to be brought out to view, what a filthy carrion should we meet with ? what a sight, what a smell would it afford ? And what should we think of a person, that should be tied down to such a companion : a barbarity said to have been exercised by a certain tyrant, in binding the living to the dead, and letting them linger away in these noisome embraces ? Surely the worst of torments would not be half so insupportable. So foul, so detestable a thing is a dead corpse, that is half putrified. O mortals, why will you then not remember what your composition is, and what you are quickly like to come to ? O filth and corruption, why wilt thou be proud ?

Consider 3dly, what companions, what attendants, these bodies of ours must meet with in the grave ? Ah ! no others than worms and maggots, or such like foul insects. *Under thee shall the moth be strewed, and worms shall be thy covering,* Isai. xiv. 11. For these, O man, thou art preparing a banquet, when thou art pampering thy body. These are to be thy inheritance, or rather they are to inherit thee : whatever thou art to-day, to-morrow thou art to be the food of worms. See here, vain worldlings, what will soon be the end of all these beauties, which you are so fond of, and which are so apt to draw you into sin : filthy maggots shall very shortly prey upon these pretty faces.

Conclude to make small account of the beauty of the body, or of any thing else that death can take away ; and to turn thy thoughts towards the better part, by laying up immortal riches for thy immortal soul, and procuring for her such ornaments of Christian virtues, as may be out of the reach of death.

*On the Soul's first entering into another World.*

July 12. **C**ONSIDER first, how the soul in death shuts her eyes, in a moment, to this world, and to all persons and things, which she has affected here; never to take any more part in the transactions of this life: and immediately opens to them a new and surprising scene, quite strange to her, in a region of spirits, an unknown land, of which before she had no idea. She awakes, as it were, out of a dream, which is now slipt away from her, and leaves both her hands and her heart empty: all is over with her as to this world: she is estranged for ever from all conversation of mortals; no one of her dearest friends can accompany her, or attend her now: she finds herself abandoned by all her lovers, quite naked, and, what is most frightful, encompassed with infernal furies, that use their utmost efforts to lay violent hands upon her. Good God, who shall protect us at that hour from these our mortal enemies!

Consider 2dly, the immense difference there is found at this time between the souls of the servants of God, and the souls of the wicked. For although both the one and the other are to expect that the common enemy, with all his hellish forces, will exert himself on this occasion, and do his worst to get their souls into his claws, yet the servants of God are defended from his assaults by the care of their guardian angels, and under the covert of their wings, go forward with joy and security, being also encompassed, on all sides, with their good works, as with a strong rampart, which both keeps the devil at a distance, and gives them a comfortable assurance of coming off well at their trial. Whereas the wicked, that have made no such provision for themselves, shall now lie at the mercy of the infernal spirits, having nothing else to carry with them to the bar, but the conscience of their past crimes, which

shall be more terrible to them than the devil himself. O my soul, let us at least be more wise, and take care, whilst we have time, to lay up for ourselves a store of good works; and thus make ourselves friends, to stand by us at that hour that is to decide our eternal doom. Such as these will be friends indeed, that will never forsake us, but will effectually plead our cause at the bar, where no other eloquence shall be regarded.

Consider 3dly, in what a wretched plight poor worldlings shall find themselves now, who have provided no such friends as these to plead for them: who have seldom or never thought of this hour, but have lived as if they were never to die. Alas! what will all their honours, riches, and pleasures avail them now? Where is now their state and retinue? Where are all their servants and attendants? What is become of the multitude of their flatterers and visitors? See how they have left them all alone in the evil day: and whatever way they now look for help or comfort, they meet with none: their time is past: they are hurried away, to be immediately tried, and examined at the dreadful bar of a just Judge: and all things both within and without them, declare to them the horrible sentence, that is just going to fall upon their heads for an eternity. Sweet Jesus, preserve me from ever having any part to act in so dismal a tragedy!

Conclude to live now in such a manner, as to have no reason to apprehend this scene of evils, which shall terrify the sinner at his departure hence; but that thy passage into eternity, may be to thee the gate of a life that knows no death. O take care to carry nothing with thee hence, that may then give the enemy any hold of thee.

*On the particular Judgment after Death.*

July 13. **C**ONSIDER first, that besides the general judgment that shall be at the end of the world, there is a particular judgment, that passes upon the soul presently after death, according to that of the apostle (speaking of the time when we are discharged from the body) *Cor. v. 10. We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that every one may receive the proper things of the body, according as he hath done, whether it be good, or evil.* Thus we see, in the case of Dives and Lazarus, (*Luke xvi.*) that their doom was immediately decided after death, and the one sentenced to the torments of hell, the other carried by angels to Abraham's bosom. See then, my soul, what thou art to look for, as soon as thou art parted from the body : thou must be presented before the judgment-seat of Christ : in order to give an account of thy whole life ; even of all that thou hast thought, said, or done, during thy abode in the body ; and to receive sentence accordingly for life, or death eternal : and the sentence that shall pass then, shall be ratified in the general judgment at the last day. O reflect then how thy accounts stand at present with thy God. O what couldst thou be able to say for thyself, if this night thou shouldst be cited to the bar ? It may perhaps be thy case : for the Judge has long ago declared, that he will come when thou least expectest him : take care then to be always ready.

Consider 2dly, the qualities of this Judge, by whom we are to be tried after death. He is *infinitely holy* ; and therefore cannot endure iniquity. He is *infinitely wise*, and therefore cannot be deceived : his all-seeing eye is ever upon all our ways : all the thoughts and motions of our hearts are *naked and open* to his sight : they are all recorded in his book : no one of them all can slip his notice or memory. He is also *infinitely powerful* ; and therefore there is no resisting or withstanding his judgment : no dig-



nity, no authority, no strength, no subtlety, no fraud, no learning or wit, can be available at his tribunal: he made both great and little; king and beggar are equally his subjects: and there is no respect of persons with him, nor appeal from him. In fine, he is *infinitely just*, and therefore *will render to every man* at that time *according to his works*. No favour is to be expected then for sins unrepented of. The time of merit, and of acceptable repentance, is now at an end. Ah! Christians, let us think well on these truths, whilst it is *our day*, in which mercy reigns; let us clear up all our accounts, while we have time; let us wash away our sins now with penitential tears; let us store up to ourselves immortal treasures, before the night overtakes us. All that we can then do will come too late.

Consider 3dly, some other circumstances of this great trial: particularly the *law* by which we are to be tried; the *accusers* and *witnesses* that shall appear against us; and the nature of the *sentence*, that shall be pronounced, after the hearing of the whole cause. The *law* by which we shall be tried, shall be the commandments of God, and the gospel of Jesus Christ: by this law, by these heavenly rules, we must stand or fall: these shall acquit us, or condemn us for eternity. O let us then study them well, and in practice conform our whole lives to them. Our *accusers* shall be the devils, and the unhappy accomplices of our crimes; more especially such as we have drawn into sin; the blood of whose souls shall cry to heaven for vengeance against us. The *witnesses* shall be our own guilty consciences. And the *sentence* shall be an unchangeable, irrevocable, eternal doom, either to heaven or hell. O let us remember these things, and we shall never sin.

Conclude to let thy whole life henceforward be a preparation for this great trial; and thou shalt not fail of a happy issue.

*On the Examination of the Soul in Judgment.*

July 14. **C**ONSIDER first, my soul, what an account will be here demanded of thy stewardship. For thou shalt be here examined how thou hast discharged thyself of every branch of thy duty, both in general and in particular, to thy God, to thy neighbour, and to thyself? How thou hast employed thy precious time? What use thou hast made of the talents God has entrusted thee with? In what manner thou hast corresponded with the graces thou hast received? What profit thou hast reaped, from the sacraments, from the word of God, and from the favourable circumstances in which God has placed thee. How thou hast acquitted thyself of the duties of thy calling, &c.? O, poor wretch, what shalt thou be able to answer under so strict an examination, where thy all is at stake for eternity? *O what shall I do*, said holy Job, (chap. xxxi. 14.) *when God shall arise to judge? And when he shall examine, what shall I answer him?* Alas! who shall be able to endure his scrutiny; or to *answer one thing for a thousand!* O Lord, *enter not into judgment with thy servant: for in thy sight no man living shall be justified*, Ps. cxlii.

Consider 2dly, that at this great trial, the whole history of thy life shall be set before thee; and all thy hidden sins, all thy sins of commission or omission, even to every idle word, and every thought, and motion of thy heart, shall be exposed in their true colours. Ah! what treasures of iniquity shall here come to light; when the veil shall be removed, which hides at present the greatest part of our sins from the eyes of the world, and even from our own; and it shall be said of us: behold the man with all his works: behold all his abominations: behold all his pride, and contempt of God: behold all his filth, &c. O, my soul, how shalt thou be able to bear such a sight! O let us then make it our study now to know our sins, and to efface them by pe-

nance, while we have time; that they may not then appear in judgment against us, and condemn us at the bar.

Consider 3dly, that the poor soul shall not only be brought here to a strict examination, with regard to all the evil she has done, and to all the good she has left undone, during the whole time of her pilgrimage in this mortal body: but even all the good she thinks she has done, the very best of her works, her prayers, her fasts, her alms deeds, her confessions and communions, shall all be nicely sifted; as well with relation to the intention with which she has undertaken them, as to the manner in which she has performed them, &c. And all shall be weighed; not in the deceitful balance of the judgment of men; but in the unerring scales of the sanctuary; that is, of divine justice: in which, the works that are most admired by deluded mortals are often found to be of no weight at all. Alas! poor soul, what an astonishment, what anguish, what confusion shall it be to thee, to see so many things rise up in judgment against thee, now charged upon thee as heinous sins, of which in thy life time thou hast made but small account: and to find at the same time that these good works, with which thou wast in hopes the scales should be turned in thy favour, have either not been accepted of, for want of just weight; or have been corrupted and vitiated by pride or self-love?

Conclude to have always before thy eyes this exact account thou must one day give, of every thought, word, deed, and omission of thy whole life. Remember they all pass from thy hands to the hands of God, to be recorded in his great book; by which thou art to be tried; see thou order them accordingly.

*On the different States of departed Souls before the last Day.*

July 15. **C**ONSIDER first, that according to the different issue of this trial, in the particular judgment, the condition of departed souls shall be very different. For such, as like the rich glutton, (*Luke xvi.*) shall be found, at the time of their departure, quite void of grace and charity: and, in a word, all such as have died in mortal sin, shall, like the rich glutton, be immediately buried in the flames of hell, *where the worm never dies, and the fire is never extinguished.* Ah! how strangely shall the men of riches, the great ones of this world, the ladies that have been slaves to their pleasures, here find their condition altered! A bed of fire instead of their soft couches: the want of every thing that can afford the least comfort, even to a drop of water, instead of their former affluence: insulting devils instead of servants and attendants: eternal torments for momentary satisfactions, &c. In fine, they that could never brook the least thing contrary to their own humour, appetite, or will, now find themselves in an instant plunged into that bottomless pit, where they shall never know what it is to be indulged in any one desire or inclination. O! that the children of this world, the unhappy slaves of their passions and pleasures, would think of this whilst they have time!

Consider 2<sup>dly</sup>, the very different condition of the souls of the children of God, after their departure hence. For as many of them as, like the martyrs, and other saints, shall be found, when they are presented before the judge, without blemish of sin, or debt of punishment, due to divine justice, on account of former offences, not sufficiently expiated, shall be immediately translated to heavenly joys. *Their earthly house of this temporal dwelling is now dissolved, but they have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in heaven, 2 Cor. v. 1.*

*They are absent from the body, but present with the Lord, v. 8. They enjoy what the apostle so much longed for, when he desired to be dissolved, and to be with Christ, Philip. iii. 23. They are now before the throne of God, and in his temple, and he that sitteth on the throne dwelleth over them: and the Lamb leads them to the living fountains of waters, (Revel. vii. 15, 17) even the happy waters of eternal life, which ever flow from the throne of God. They follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth, (chap. xiv. 4.) and they live and reign with him, chap. xx. 4. They even sit with him in his throne, (Revel. iii. 21.) and exercise with him power over the nations, chap. ii. 26. See, Christians, if you will but dedicate yourselves in good earnest to the love of God, during your short pilgrimage, what great things are prepared for you in your true country, and that immediately after your departure hence. How little reason then have the true lovers of God to apprehend a death, that shall bring them in an instant to the very fountain's head of true and everlasting life! O what a happiness it is to shut in a moment the eyes with which we see this world and mortals: and to open them immediately to the sight of God and of Christ! S. Cyprian.*

Consider 3dly, that as all are to be tried, after their departure, by their *works*, and to be rewarded according to their works, which they carry with them hence to the judgment seat of Christ: so those whose *dead works* have not been fully expiated by penance; whose devotions and other good works have been full of imperfections; who have built only with *wood, hay, and stubble*, though not to the destroying of the *foundation* of the faith and grace of Christ; shall suffer loss in this *fiery trial*; and instead of being immediately admitted into the presence of God, in his heavenly temple, where nothing defiled shall enter, must wait till the dross they have carried with them out of the world be purged away, and they be fitted for the sight and enjoyment of their sovereign good. O how few souls shall be

*On the Sufferings of Souls in the middle State.* 33

found at their departure so perfectly pure, as to be qualified to fly up immediately to the embraces of God! How very few are there that carry with them no spot, no blemish, no debt, not even of *an idle word*, into the other world: where, by the fixed decrees of heaven, every soul shall be judged and rewarded, according to what she carries hence!

Conclude to spare no pains now to rid thyself, by penitential exercises, of all thy spots, stains, and debts, *whilst thou art on the way*, lest if thou leave them to be discharged in another world, thou mayest be cast into that prison, of which it is written, (*Matt. v. 26.*) *Amen I say to thee, thou shalt not go out from thence, till thou pay the last farthing.*

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*On the Sufferings of Souls in the middle State.*

July 16. **C**ONSIDER first, that in this middle state of souls (which are neither so perfect and pure as to be presently associated with the Angels and Saints in heaven; nor yet so bad, as to be condemned to that lower hell, out of which there is no redemption,) these spirits in prison suffer much, from their being kept at a distance from their God, their only true and sovereign good. They are perfectly sensible now, how infinite he is in himself, in goodness, beauty, truth, and all perfections: and what an infinite happiness it is to be with him, and to enjoy him eternally. All those created goods, that before claimed any share in their affections, are all now vanished away; and their *whole* hearts are now carried towards him, with such vehement longing desires, as by us mortals can neither be expressed or conceived: so that their being detained from him, in whom alone they can find repose, is an unspeakable anguish to their souls. And what adds to their torture is the sense they now have of their sins; of all those spots and stains that disqualify them for the enjoyment of their God; and of those unhappy debts, that keep them at a distance from him: which they resent with so great horror, that

heaven itself would be no heaven to them, if their sins were to follow them thither.

Consider 2dly, that besides these two kinds of sufferings, from the absence of God, and the presence of sin, which are common (though not in an equal degree) to all these imprisoned spirits: there are other great torments inflicted on such as have been great debtors and negligent penitents; but all with a just proportion to their sins. *They shall be saved,* says the Apostle, *yet so as by fire,* 1 Cor. iii. 15. But what kind of fire? O! a fire kindled by the wrath of God: a fire which shall penetrate their whole souls, and burn, without consuming, in some for many years, in some perhaps even to the day of judgment. But *because it is said they shall be saved; this fire is made light of,* saith St. Austin, (Psalm xxxvii.) *but surely though they shall be saved by it, yet is this fire more grievous than whatsoever a man can suffer in this life.* Christians, see then how much you are enemies to your own souls, when for fear of hurting these sinful carcasses, you neglect to punish your sins by mortifications and penance: and by this means reserve so much more fuel for this purging fire.

Consider 3dly, that however rigorous the divine justice is, in the punishment it inflicts, on account of sin, upon these souls that are in this state of a fiery purgation; yet their condition admits of many comforts, that are denied to the damned; which make an immense difference between one fire and the other. For as these souls have departed this life in the state of charity and grace, true penitents, though imperfect; they are here comforted with a good conscience, and with the assurance they have that they love God, and are loved by him: they know that they are his children, and under his protection, and that their sufferings shall soon have an end; (for all time is short) and shall terminate in the never-ending joys of a happy eternity. In the meanwhile, the love they have for God, gives them a per-

fect conformity with his blessed will, and a certain peace, content, and joy in all they suffer, because such is his will: they even desire that divine justice should be satisfied: and lovingly embrace those flames that are to purify them from the rust of sin, and to fit them for him. O how happy should we be, if under all our sufferings here, we entered into the like sentiments! Such a purgatory as this, of temporal sufferings, endured with resignation, humility, and love, would go a great way towards purifying our souls from our sins, and fitting them for heaven.

Conclude, since nothing impure can ever come to be united to the infinite purity of God till it be first thoroughly purged, either in this world or the next, to make it thy business to get thyself thoroughly purified here; by penitential labours, by patience in suffering, and by fervour in the practice of all virtues, but especially of divine charity. For this will be to thee a far more easy, mild, and wholesome purgatory, than the dreadful fire of the world to come.

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*On the Terrors of the last Day.*

July 17. **C**ONSIDER first, that nothing can be conceived more terrible than the prospect the scripture gives us of the last accounting day, with all the prodigies that shall go before it. The sun shall be darkened; the moon red as blood; the stars without light, and seeming to fall from the firmament; the earth shall be shaken with violent earthquakes; the sea swelling and roaring with unusual tempests; the elements all in confusion, and whole nature in disorder. *The great day of the Lord is near, saith the prophet, (Sophon. i. 14, 15.) it is near, and exceeding swift:—That day is a day of wrath, a day of tribulation and distress, a day of calamity and misery, a day of darkness and obscurity, a day of clouds and whirlwinds, &c.* But oh! what



shall then be the thoughts of unhappy sinners, who shall see themselves threatened with all these frightful signs of the divine indignation? Alas! they shall perfectly *wither away*, according to the expression of the gospel, (*Luke xxi. 26.*) *for fear and expectation of what shall come upon the whole world; and through the apprehension of that dismal tragedy, which shall suddenly follow after these frightful preludes.*

Consider 2dly, that these terrors shall chiefly affect the wicked, against whom they are all levelled: so that *they shall begin to say to the mountains: fall upon us, and to the hills cover us, (Luke xxiii. 30.) and hide us from the face of him that sitteth upon the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: for the great day of their wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand? Apoc. vi. 16, 17.* But as for the true servants of God, who are his friends and children, *when these things shall begin to come to pass, they are told (Luke xxii. 28.) to look up, and to lift up their heads; because their redemption is at hand.* And surely the more they love God, and take to heart the interest of the glory of Christ, and the coming of his everlasting kingdom; the more will they rejoice at the approaches of that day, that shall be so glorious to him, and so happy for all his elect. The day, in which he shall be publicly acknowledged by the whole universe, for the great Lord and judge of all: the day, in which he shall finally triumph over all his enemies, and make all his servants sharers in his triumph and glory: the day, in which he shall put an end to the usurpation of Satan, and to the reign of sin and death; and send them all to their proper place, never to come out any more: the day, in which he shall abolish for ever the corruption of the flesh, together with the old man; and all the errors and lying fooleries of a deluded and deluding world; and shall establish the eternal reign of incorruption, justice, and truth. In fine, the day, in which he shall wonderfully renew both heaven

and earth; and bring all his servants into the never-ending joy of their Lord. O when shall that happy day come!

Consider 3dly, that after all those frightful symptoms, above rehearsed, of the last agony, and final expiring of this sinful world, a fire shall come raging like a torrent; that shall at once involve all the kingdoms of the earth in devouring flames; sweeping off and consuming all it shall find upon the whole face of the globe, and reducing all to smoke and ashes. Where then, O ye worldlings, will be all these painted toys you are now so fond of? Where will be your gardens and palaces? Where your gold and silver, your costly plate and jewels, your pompous equipages, and whatsoever else you seem to possess in this *dream* of your mortal life? Alas! all these things shall end in smoke; and when you wake you shall *find nothing in your hands*, Ps. lxxv. *O that men would be wise, and would understand, and would provide for their last end!* Deut. xxxii. 29. Do thou at least, O my soul, learn to be wise, by the consideration of this last fire, that shall so suddenly put an end to all these worldly bubbles; and take thou care to provide for thyself, by laying up thy treasure in heaven; where alone it shall be out of the reach of this fiery deluge.

Conclude to be always afraid of sin; to fly and abhor it above all evil; and thou shalt have nothing to fear at the last day.

*On the general Resurrection.*

July 18. **C**ONSIDER first, that this world being now at an end, the Archangel shall sound the last trumpet; and with a loud voice shall call for all the dead to arise, and to come to judgment: this voice shall at once be heard over all the universe, and presently obeyed: it shall pierce the highest heavens, and penetrate down to the lowest abyss of hell. At this voice, *in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye*, by the almighty power of our

great Creator, all the children of Adam, from the first to the last, shall arise from the dust; and every soul shall again be united to its own body, never more to part for eternity: that as the soul and body have in this world been partners in good or evil; so they may in the world to come be sharers also in reward or punishment. Christians, let the sound of this last trumpet always echo in your ears.

Consider 2dly, the wonderful difference there shall be, at the time of this general resurrection, between the bodies of the just and those of the wicked. The just shall rise in bodies most beautiful, purer than the stars, brighter than the sun, immortal and impassible: but the wicked shall rise in bodies suitable to their deserts, foul, black, hideous, and every way loathsome and insupportable; immortal, it is true, but to no other end than to endure immortal torments. Oh! what an inexpressible torture shall it be to these wretched souls to be forced into such odious carcasses; and to be condemned to an eternal confinement in such a horrid and filthy prison? O, learn then, my soul, to keep thy body now pure from the corruption of carnal sins, lest otherwise it come to be at that day a sad aggravation of thy never-ending misery.

Consider 3dly, with how much joy and delight the souls of the just shall be again united to their bodies, which they have so long desired; and with what affection they shall embrace those old companions and partners of all their labours, of all their sufferings and mortifications; and now designed to share with them in the glory of the heavenly Sion, and to give no small addition to their everlasting happiness. But oh! what dreadful curses shall pass at the melancholy meeting of the souls and bodies of the reprobate! Accursed carrion, shall the soul say, was it to gratify thee, and to indulge thy brutish inclinations, that I have forfeited the immortal joys of heaven? Ah! wretch, to give thee a filthy pleasure of a moment, I have damned both myself and thee

to all eternity. O! thrice accursed carcase, it is just, that thou, who hast been the cause of my damnation, shouldst be my partner in eternal woe! But oughtest not thou rather, O unhappy soul, to be a thousand times over accursed by thy body, since it was thy business, and was in thy power, to have subjected its passions and lusts to the rules of reason and religion; and thou didst rather choose, for the sake of a momentary delight, to enslave thyself to its sensual inclinations, and so to purchase hell both for thyself and it? Ah! Christians, let us at least learn to be wise, and so to keep both our body and soul in good order here; that they both may be eternally happy together hereafter.

Conclude to prevent the terrors that shall seize the wicked at that great summons of the last trumpet, which shall call the dead from their graves to go forth to meet the judge; by giving ear now to another summons of the great trumpet of the Holy Ghost, calling upon thee by the Apostle: (*Eph. v. 14.*) *Rise, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, (that is, from the death of sin to the life of grace) and Christ shall enlighten thee.* Thus by *having part in the first resurrection*, thou shalt provide in time against that great day, when *time shall be no more.* Thus thou shalt escape *the second death.*

On the Coming of the Judge.

July 19. **C**ONSIDER first, that the dead being risen, shall immediately be assembled together from all places, to meet the judge: and this, as it is thought, near Jerusalem, in the sight of Mount Olivet, and of Mount Calvary, where our Lord heretofore shed his blood for our redemption. O! what a sight will it be to behold here all the children of Adam, an innumerable multitude of all nations, ages, and conditions, standing together, without any distinction now of rich or poor, great or little, master or servant, monarch or subject; excepting only the distinction of *good and bad*, which

shall be wonderful and eternal. Alas! how mean a figure shall an *Alexander*, or a *Cesar*, make at this appearance; or any of those celebrated heroes of antiquity, whose very name has made whole nations tremble? Those mighty monarchs, that had once the world at their beck, are now levelled with the meanest of their slaves, and would wish a thousand times they had never worn the diadem. And hast thou, my soul, ever well considered the part thou shalt have to act in this last scene?

Consider 2dly, how the great judge shall immediately make his appearance; and every *eye shall see him* coming down from heaven, *with great power and majesty*; armed with all the terrors of his justice, and surrounded with all his heavenly legions. O how different from his first coming shall this his second appearance be! His first coming was with wonderful meekness and humility; because that was *our day*, in which he came to redeem us by his *mercy*; but at his second coming, it shall be *his day*, in which his *justice* shall take place, to revenge upon sinful man the cause of his injured *mercy*, with a final vengeance once for all. Ah! miserable sinners how shall you then be able to stand before his face, or bear his wrathful countenance? How shall you then wish to hide your guilty heads, even in the lowest hell, rather than to endure this dreadful appearance! but all in vain: you must stand it out.

Consider 3dly, how upon this occasion the royal standard of the cross (*the sign of the Son of man*) shall be carried before the Judge, shining more bright than the sun, to the unspeakable comfort of the good; and the intolerable anguish and confusion of the wicked; for having made so little advantage of the inestimable benefit of their redemption. Here they shall plainly see what their God has suffered for their salvation; and how great has been his love for them; that boundles and unparalleled love, which brought him down from his throne of glory and nailed him to the cross. O how shall they now condemn their

*On the Separation of the Good and the Bad.* 41

past obstinacy in sin, with all their blindness and ingratitude! O how shall this glorious ensign justify, in the face of the whole universe, the conduct of God, and the dreadful torments he has prepared for unrepenting sinners! For what less than a miserable eternity can be punishment enough for so much obstinacy in sin, after so much goodness and love?

Conclude to take care, whilst thou hast time, to make a proper provision for this great appearance, by turning now to God, with thy whole heart, and embracing a penitential life: for why shouldst thou go on any longer, adding daily sin to sin, and so *treasuring up to thyself wrath against this day of wrath?* Rom. ii. 5.

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*On the Separation of the Good and the Bad.*

July 20. **C**ONSIDER first, how the sovereign Judge, being seated on his glorious throne aloft in the air, attended with all his millions of millions of angels, in their different orders and hierarchies, shall presently give his command, which shall be instantly obeyed, for the final and eternal separation of the good from the bad: after which these two companies shall never never more meet. Then shall all the true servants of God *be caught up in the clouds, to Christ in the air,* (1 *Thes.* iv. 16.) and shall be placed with honour on his right hand: and such of them as, like the Apostles, have in their life time quitted all things else to follow him, shall also take their seats with him, as judges both of Angels and men, *Matt.* xix. 25. 1 *Cor.* vi. 2, 3. But all the wicked, together with the devils, whom they have followed, shall be driven with ignominy to the left hand. And thou, my soul, where dost thou expect to stand at that day? In which of these two companies shalt thou be ranked? Thou hast it now in thy choice; but shall not have it then. Choose then now, in *this thy day,* that *better part, that shall never be taken from thee,* *Luke* x.

Consider 2dly, what shall then be the thoughts of

the grandees of the world, of the rich, of the worldly wise, of the great heroes, of the fine ladies, &c. when they shall see the poor in spirit, the meek, the humble, that were so contemptible in their eyes, when they were here in this mortal life, now honoured and exalted; and crowned with immortal glory, dignity, strength, and beauty: but themselves depressed to the lowest extremity of disgrace, contempt, and irremediable want of all things. O! what horror, what confusion, what envy, what rage, shall oppress their souls to see this strange catastrophe! O what shall then be their sentiments of all those empty toys which they had been so fond of in their life time! How shall they now condemn their own madness, in having set their hearts upon those lying follies, to the eternal loss of their immortal souls! How shall they now wish, a thousand and a thousand times, they had followed the examples of the Saints, and walked in the charming paths of virtue and devotion!

Consider 3dly, in what manner the sentiments, which the wicked shall have on this occasion, are expressed by the Spirit of God: (*Wisdom v.*) *These seeing it, (viz. the glorious exaltation of the just) shall be troubled with horrible fear, and shall be amazed at the suddenness of their unexpected salvation: saying within themselves, repenting, and groaning for anguish of spirit: these are they whom we had heretofore in derision, and for a parable of reproach; we fools esteemed their life madness, and their end without honour: behold how they are numbered among the children of God; and their lot is among the Saints. Therefore we have erred from the way of truth, and the light of justice hath not shined unto us, and the sun of understanding hath not risen upon us, we wearied ourselves in the way of iniquity and destruction; and we have walked through hard ways, but the way of the Lord we have not known. What hath pride profited us? Or what advantage hath the boasting of riches brought us? All those things have passed away like a shadow, and like a post that runneth on, and as a ship*

that passeth through the waves, whereof, when it is gone by, the trace cannot be found—so we being born have forthwith ceased to be; and have been able to shew no mark of virtue: but are consumed in our wickedness. Ah! Christians, mark well these speeches of the reprobate, and take effectual measures whilst you have time, that their misfortune may never be yours.

Conclude to fly now from the midst of Babylon; by standing off from the corruption and infection of a wicked world; and separating yourselves from the society of the wicked in time; that you may not be involved in their eternal misery.

## On the Opening of the Books.

July 21. **C**ONSIDER first, what we read in the word of God of the opening of the books, when God shall sit down to judge, *Dan. vii. I beheld, saith the prophet, till thrones were placed, and the Ancient of days sat down.—Thousands of thousands ministered to him, and ten thousand times a hundred thousand stood before him: the judgment sat, and THE BOOKS WERE OPENED. And Revel. xx. 11, 12. I saw a great white throne, saith St. John, and one sitting upon it, from whose face the earth and heaven fled away, and there was no place found for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and THE BOOKS WERE OPENED: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged by those things which were written in the books, according to their works.* Christians, attend to these awful truths: and think well on these books, by the contents of which you are to be judged. The study of these will be of infinitely more importance to you, than the knowledge of all the books of the *belles lettres*, and human sciences, which must all perish in the last fire.

Consider 2dly, what these books are, which shall be produced, and set open at the day of judgment.



In the first place, there shall be the books of our consciences: with all the divine records, in which our thoughts, words, and actions, are punctually registered. In the second place, the books of the gospel, of the rules of life, prescribed by Jesus Christ, and of the commandments of God. And lastly *the book of life*; even that book, in the first line of which it is written of Jesus Christ (*Ps. xxxix.*) that he should *come, to do his Father's will*; and in which the names of all stand recorded, under the name of Jesus Christ, who with him, and through him, have made it the main business of their life, to do the will of him, and of his Father; and who have embraced the law of his love in the very midst of their hearts. Christians, examine yourselves now by these books; judge yourselves now by these books; and all shall be well with you then. See how your accounts now stands in your own consciences: but O! beware of the delusions of self-love. Reflect how all your thoughts, words, and actions, in the moment they go from you, are presently enrolled in the divine books. Ah! in what condition are yours to appear there? Shall your life be able to stand the trial of the book of the gospel? Or shall not rather your faith rise up in judgment against you, and condemn you, for having renounced in practice what you professed to believe? Has your name any place in the book of life, where none are entered but such as do the will of God?

Consider 3dly, how upon the opening of these books, the sins of the reprobate shall not only all appear, in their most odious shapes, to their own eyes; but also be exposed to the public view of that whole immense assembly of all heaven and earth; visible and evident to the eyes of all, both angels and men, good and bad. Ah! poor sinner, where shalt thou then hide thy head? What shame, what anguish shall oppress thee, when all thy filth and abominations, all thy works of darkness, which thou hadst committed in the greatest secrecy, and which thou

wouldst not have had known to thy friends and acquaintance for all the world; and perhaps couldst not find in thy heart to disclose, even to one person, tied by all laws to an eternal secrecy, shall now be displayed before thy face, with all their aggravating circumstances, in this great consistory of the whole universe?

Conclude to prevent by a hearty repentance, and a sincere confession of all thy guilt, now whilst thou hast time, the dreadful confusion, which otherwise thou shalt suffer at that day: and the great Judge shall then ratify the absolution, that has been given thee here by virtue of his commission, and clear thee from all thy sins.

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*On the Conversion of St. Mary Magdalene*  
Luke vii.

July 22. **C**ONSIDER first, the sudden and wonderful change God was pleased to work in the heart of this glorious penitent. *Behold a woman in the city that was a sinner, (saith St. Luke) when she knew that Jesus was at meat in the house of the Pharisee, brought an alabaster box of ointment; and standing behind at his feet, she began to wash his feet with her tears; and she wiped them with the hairs of her head, and she kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment, Luke vii. 37, 38.* See here, my soul, a penitent indeed; thoroughly penetrated with the sense of the dreadful evil of her sins, and therefore not to be restrained, either by shame or fear, or any considerations of what the world would think, or say, from running immediately to her Saviour, tho' then at table, and in the midst of the Pharisees, and there to do public penance, without regard to their censures or contempt. O see what it is for a soul to have her eyes truly opened, to discover the deformity of her sins, and to view those odious monsters in their true shape, which have so long possessed her! She thinks every moment an age, till by running to our Lord, she can get rid of her guilt, whatever it

may cost her, or whoever may scoff at her, or censure her for it.

Consider 2dly, the chiefest ingredients in Magdalen's conversion ; her faith, her humility, her love, her penitential tears, and her dedicating now to the service of her Lord all that she had before employed in sin. Her *faith*, joined with her humble confidence in the goodness and mercy of her Saviour, appears in her running to him to be washed and cleansed by him from all her filth, in the true fountain of life. Her *humility* appears, in her not daring to come before his face, nor to address herself to him in words, but standing behind at his feet, and speaking to his heart by floods of tears. Her ardent *love* shews itself, in her often kissing his feet, and in the *penitential tears* it produces ; and is therefore taken notice of by our Lord, as the main disposition towards her justification. *Many sins are forgiven her* (said he) *for she hath loved much*, ver. 47. And now her hair, her precious ointments, her whole person, are wholly dedicated to her Saviour, to whom, from this time forward, she adheres, with such an inviolable fidelity, and unalterable affection, as not even to suffer herself to be kept off from him, either by the ignominy of the cross, or the horror of the sepulchre. See, sinners, what it is to be a perfect convert, what it is to be a penitent indeed.

Consider 3dly, the lessons all Christians may learn from Magdalen's conversion. And first, a sense of the wonderful mercies of God, who thus changes, in an instant, the greatest sinners into the greatest saints ; that so we may never despair of the conversion of any one, nor ever presume to despise poor sinners, how abandoned soever, or to prefer ourselves before any of them ; since whatever they are to-day, to-morrow they may be great penitents, and great favourites of heaven. Secondly, we must learn, from this great example, a ready compliance with the graces and calls of God ; with a courage and resolution to overcome the opposition, we shall

be sure to meet with in our return to God, from old habits, human respects, or any other considerations. Alas! if Magdalen had regarded the censures of the world, or delayed her conversion, for fear of what the Pharisees should say or think of her, in all appearance she would have died in her sins. Thirdly, we may learn by her example, that the most effectual means for the remission of all our sins, and the advancing of our souls to the perfection of all holiness, is an ardent love of our blessed Redeemer, and a repentance influenced by love. Happy we, if we can but learn of her to go daily in this penitential spirit to the feet of Christ! He never rejects a penitent lover.

Conclude, if thou hast followed Magdalen in her sins, to imitate her also in her conversion: and the more, and the greater thy sins have been, to make the greater return of love to him, who has so mercifully spared thee in thy sins, and so lovingly forgiven thee that immense debt, which thou owedst to his justice.

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*On the last Sentence of the Good.*

July 23. **C**ONSIDER first, that the great assizes of the last day shall be concluded by a definitive sentence: by which the just, after a glorious rehearsal of all their good works, shall be called up to a *kingdom* where sorrows never enter, and joys never end; and the wicked shall be condemned to the dismal dungeons of *everlasting fire*. But first give ear, O my soul, to that sweet and amiable invitation, (which thou hopest shall be one day thine) by which their dear Lord shall call all his servants, his friends, and his children, into the glorious mansions of eternal bliss. *Come, ye blessed of my Father, shall he say, possess the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world, Matt. xxv. 34.* O happy invitation! O happy, thrice happy, they, that shall be found worthy to partake of this joyful sentence! What unspeakable satisfaction and de-

light, what torrents of joy and pleasure, shall flow into their souls, at the hearing of it? But oh! what envy, what rage shall possess the souls of the reprobate, when they shall hear this invitation, and shall see several of their own acquaintance going to take possession of that eternal kingdom; which they might also have so easily purchased, but by their folly and stupidity have blindly exchanged for the flames of hell?

Consider *ſdly*, and weigh well at thy leisure, the words of this happy sentence: *Come*, says the Judge, *ye blessed of my Father, &c. Come*, (*O* sweet invitation!) from the vale of tears, to the blissful regions of never ending joys. Come from a tedious banishment, to your true heavenly country: from your mortal pilgrimage, in the midst of crosses, labours, conflicts, and dangers, to your blessed home, in the fair and lovely mansions of rest and peace, in the eternal Sion: where you shall meet with all that your heart can desire, to complete your happiness; where you shall be for ever inebriated by the plenty of my house, and drink for ever at the fountain of life. *Arise, my beloved, the winter is now past, the floods and storms are all over, arise and come. Come enter into the joy of your Lord; the kingdom prepared for you from the beginning; an universal good, a blessing including all blessings, and extending to endless ages. O my soul, learn thou to despise all other happiness, in hopes of having a share, one day, in this blessed sentence.*

Consider *ſdly*, that what is most to be admired and loved in this heavenly sentence, is that it brings our souls to an eternal union with God himself, our only true and sovereign good. This *come*, this sweet word of salvation, draws us to our God, unites us to him, receives us into the very bosom of his goodness; and in a manner transforms us into him. And nothing less could ever truly satisfy our souls! *O* happy *blessing* indeed, to be thus *blessed of the Father*, by an eternal union with himself. *O* hap-

py kingdom, in which we shall eternally live and reign with the ever living God! *I rejoiced*, said the Royal Prophet, (*Ps. cxxi.*) *at the things that were said to me: we shall go into the house of the Lord.* But, O my soul, how much more oughtest thou to rejoice at the happy prospect of thy being one day day called, not only into the house of the Lord, but even to a union with the Lord himself?

Conclude to spare no pains to secure to thyself this happy sentence by a diligence in all good works, more especially works of mercy, and charity; which by the gospel, are particularly entitled to the sentence of the elect.

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*On the last Sentence of the Wicked.*

July 24. **C**ONSIDER first, how the great Judge, after having invited the just to his glorious kingdom, turning himself towards the wicked on his left hand with fire in his eyes, and terror in his countenance, shall thunder out against them the dreadful sentence of their irrevocable doom, in these words, *Depart from me, you cursed, into everlasting fire, which was prepared for the devil and his angels,* Matt. xv. O sinners, weigh well every word of this frightful sentence. *Depart*, saith he, *go*, be gone for ever, far from me; far from the joys of my kingdom, and the society of my children, into a place you have chosen, and blindly preferred before heaven; into the darksome dungeons of hell below, prepared for Satan and his associates, whose part you have taken against me. O terrible excommunication, to be cut off for ever from the society of Jesus Christ and his saints! O cruel divorce, to be eternally separated from God and all that is good! O dismal and everlasting banishment, to be excluded from the city of God, and sent into the low and horrid region of *the second death!* Ah! wretches, who make so little now of losing God, and his grace, by mortal sin; what shall you then think, when you shall be doomed to this eternal separation from the source of all good? But whither

are you to go from him? Alas! *into everlasting fire*, there to burn as long as God is God, in the company of *the devil and his angels* O dreadful eternity!

Consider 2dly, that terrible and universal curse, which this sentence of condemnation involves. *Depart from me, you cursed*, says the Sovereign Judge: as if he should say, you shall go from me, but take my *curse* along with you. I would have given you my *blessing*, but you would not receive it: a *curse* you have chosen, and a *curse* shall be your everlasting lot. It shall stick close to you like a garment, which you shall never put off; it shall enter into your very bowels, and search into the very marrow of your bones. A *curse* upon your eyes, never to see the least glimpse of comfortable light: a *curse* upon your ears, to hear no other music for all eternity, but frightful shrieks and groans; a *curse* on your taste, to be ever embittered with the gall of dragons: a *curse* on your smell, to be always tormented with the intolerable stench of the bottomless pit: a *curse* on your feeling, and on all the members of your body, to be for ever burning, and never to consume, in a fire that shall never be quenched. O dreadful complication of irremediable evils!

Consider 3dly, that this terrible *curse* shall not only be extended to the body, and all its senses and members: it shall also reach the soul, and all its powers and faculties. As if the great Judge should also say: a *curse* upon your understanding, never to be enlightened with any ray of truth: a *curse* upon your will, never to attain to any thing that it loves or desires, but to be always bound down to what it hates and abhors: a *curse* upon your memory, to be ever revolving, in the bitterness of a fruitless repentance, the folly and vanity of all those short-lived pleasures and worldly toys, for which you have forfeited a happy eternity: a *curse* upon your conscience, to be ever gnawed by the worm that never dies: a *curse* upon your whole soul, to be a hell to

itself; ever torn in pieces with most violent passions, of fury, envy, hatred, and despair. Good God! let me never be so miserable as to incur this dreadful and irrevocable curse. But see how this sentence is no sooner pronounced, but the earth opens, and swallows down at once all this wretched multitude, with the devils that seduced them, into the lowest hell; and then *the gate is shut* upon them, never, never to be opened. O the fatal consequences of all worldly pride! O the dismal end of carnal pleasures!

Conclude to turn now to God with thy whole heart, and henceforward to stick close to him: thus shalt thou secure to thyself a *blessing* at that day, instead of a curse.

## On St. James.

July 25. **C**ONSIDER first, that St. James, the son of Zebedee, the elder brother of St. John the Apostle, was one of those disciples, to whom our Lord was pleased to shew a more particular favour and love: he was one of the three that were chosen to be witnesses of the glory of his transfiguration: one of the three, that were admitted to be present when he raised to life the daughter of Jairus: and one of the three, whom he took along with him, to stay, and watch with him in his prayer and agony in the garden. O how great must the faith and love of St. James have been, that he should be such a favourite of Jesus? How happy are they, that like St. James, stick close to Jesus in his sorrows and sufferings, no less than in his joys and glory! The zeal and fervour of St. James, and of his brother St. John, in the cause of Christ, obtained for them from our Lord the surname of *Boanerges*, or *sons of thunder*. This glorious name they made good in their preaching, and in their labours: and St. James, with this advantage, that he was the first of all the apostles that laid down his life for the love of his master, and sealed his doctrine with his blood.



O glorious death ! to die for love, not of any mortal beauty, or worldly honour, of friends, or country ; but for the love of our Lord, the true and everlasting life. O how happy are all those sufferings, that are endured for the love of Christ !

Consider 2dly, from the epistle of this day, (1 Cor. iv.) what kind of sufferings St. James and his fellow apostles endured daily for the love of Christ, and with what patience and charity they supported them. *I think, says St. Paul, that God hath set forth us apostles, the last, as it were men appointed to death: because we are made a spectacle to the world, and to angels, and to men. We are fools for Christ's sake—we are weak—we are without honour. Even unto this hour we both hunger and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no fixed abode: and we labour, working with our own hands: we are reviled, and we bless: we are persecuted, and we suffer it: we are ill spoken of, and we entreat: we are made as the refuse of the world, and the offscouring of all even until now.* See, Christians, in what manner the greatest favourites of heaven were treated by the children of the world. But no wonder: for their master himself was treated no better: and all that will reign with him, must be content to suffer with him. O happy those crosses that bring the soul to the eternal enjoyment of her God.

Consider 3dly, from the gospel of this festival, that St. James and St. John, though they had been now trained up for three years in the school of Christ; yet before his passion and death, and their receiving the Holy Ghost, had not yet perfectly put off the old man, or purged away the old leaven of ambition, or self-seeking, and therefore they induced their mother to petition for them, that they might sit, the one on the right-hand of Christ, the other on the left, in his kingdom. Christians, beware of ambition, beware of desiring to be honoured, to be praised, to be exalted, or preferred before others: beware of all the subtleties of pride and self-love: if it found its way even into the school of Christ, (as

it had done before into the earthly paradise, and even into heaven itself) it is recorded as a warning for us ; that so dangerous and subtle an evil may not make its way with far greater ease into our unguarded souls. But hearken to the words of our Lord upon this occasion. *You know not*, says he, *what you ask. Can you drink of the chalice that I shall drink?* &c. O how true it is that *we know not what we ask*, when we ask for honours, preferments, riches, pleasures, &c. which, instead of bringing us nearer to our God, are too apt to carry us away far from him! It is *drinking* with Christ of *the chalice of his passion* ; it is taking up our cross, and following him ; it is the true means, of divine appointment, which is to bring us to Christ, and to entitle us to sit down with him on his throne, and to reign eternally with him.

Conclude to let it be thy great ambition, to keep as close as thou canst to thy Lord, with thy cross upon thy shoulders, by diligent working, suffering, and loving : and instead of pretending to high things, sit thee down by humility in the lowest place, and the highest shall be given thee.

## On St. Ann.

July 26. **C**ONSIDER first, that what gives us the highest idea of the super-eminent sanctity of St. Ann, and her blessed consort St. Joachim, is that they were chosen, by the decrees of heaven, to be the parents of that immaculate Virgin, who was to bring forth the Saviour of the world, and to be the mother of God. O what graces did they not receive, to qualify them to furnish this virgin-spouse to the Spirit of God, and this virgin-mother to the Son of God! What a saint-like, what a heavenly education, did they not give to their blessed child! How perfectly did they make good thereby that sentence of their divine Saviour, that *the tree is to be known by the fruits!* What reverence thou, what esteem, what affection, what devotion,

do we not owe to this blessed couple! All the true children of Christ have ever loved his Mother, and considered her as their mother: how then can we do otherwise than love also these two great Saints, to whom we stand indebted for such a mother?

Consider 2dly, from the lesson, or epistle, that is read on the feast of St. Ann, (out of *Proverbs xxxi.*) the properties of a *valiant*, that is, of a wise and virtuous woman, as all perfectly agreeing to this great saint: particularly her perpetual attention to *good, and not evil, all the days of her life*; her unwearied industry in acquiring the spiritual riches of all virtues, and storing up a treasure for eternity; her diligence in the exercise of all the works of mercy and charity, &c. *Strength and beauty are her cloathing*, (saith the wise man, speaking of her interior) *and she shall laugh in the last day*: (even in that day when the foolish admirers of worldly vanities shall all be sad and sorrowful) *She hath opened her mouth to wisdom, and the law of clemency is on her tongue*: (by her being ever prudent in her words, and charitably compassionate in excusing the defects of her neighbours.) *She hath looked well to the paths of her house; and hath not eaten her bread idle*: (by a serious application to keep herself always well employed, and to see that all under her charge are orderly.) Such was St. Ann, such ought all Christian matrons to be: of such as these the Spirit of God adds in the conclusion of the chapter: *Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: the woman that feareth the Lord she shall be praised. Give her of the fruit of her hands: and let her works praise her in the gates.* Yes, the Lord himself shall give her the eternal reward of the fruit of her hands: and the gates of the heavenly Sion shall resound with her praises for ever.

Consider 3dly, from the gospel of this day, that excellent *treasure* which St. Ann found, and made her own, by giving up all things else, to purchase it

for herself. *The kingdom of heaven*, says our Lord Matt. xiii. 44. *is like unto a treasure hidden in a field: which when a man hath found, he hideth it, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field.* The kingdom of heaven in this, and other passages of the gospel, is understood of the *kingdom of God within us*, by his grace in the soul; that kingdom, by which he lives, and reigns in our interior, by faith, hope, and love, and the spirit of recollection and prayer. Now this kingdom of God in our souls is a *treasure* indeed, of infinite value, which enriches us by the possession of God himself, here by grace, and hereafter in glory. This *treasure is hidden* from the children of the world, who are strangers to the value of it, and have a very mean idea of the happiness of a spiritual and internal life; but the children of God, whose eyes are opened to the truth, discover this inestimable treasure, and spare neither pains nor cost, to get it into their own possession: they *even sell all they have, to purchase it*: that is, they give up their humours, their passions, their worldly affections, their sensual inclinations, their own will, and every thing else that opposes so great a happiness: and thus this kingdom of God becomes their own, and they themselves become God's kingdom. Thus they begin to enjoy a heaven upon earth.

Conclude to *seek first the kingdom of God* in thy soul, above all things; and *all other things shall be added unto thee*: thou shalt also be reimbursed, with infinite advantage, whatever thou hast expended, in the purchase of it; and *all good things shall come to thee along with it.*

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### On Hell.

**July 27.** CONSIDER first, that it will be of no small service to thee, in order to keep thee from going down into hell after thy death, if thou wilt now, by a serious meditation, go down thither whilst thou art alive, and take a view of that

wretched place, by the help of those lights which the unerring word of God shall furnish thee with. Give ear then first to what is said of hell, in the Old Testament: where it is called, (*Job x.*) *A land (from which there is no coming back) dark, and covered with the obscurity of death: a land of misery and darkness; where the shadow of death, and no order, but everlasting horror dwelleth.* And *Isai. xxx.* where it is called *Topheth* (from the name of that dismal valley near Jerusalem, otherwise called *Gehenna*, where the idolaters burnt their children in sacrifice to the devil) of which he says: *Tophet is prepared from yesterday; prepared by the king, deep and wide. The nourishments thereof is fire, and much wood; the breath of the Lord as a torrent of brimstone kindleth it.* And what kind of torments are there prepared for the wicked, the same prophet informs us, (*chap. xxxiii. 14.*) when he puts the question to them, *which of you can dwell with devouring fire? which of you shall dwell with everlasting burnings?* The wise man adds, (*Eccles. xxxix.*) *That they are spirits that are created for vengeance, and in their fury they lay on grievous torments: in the time of destruction they shall pour out their force, and shall appease the wrath of him that made them. Fire, hail, famine, and death, all these were created for vengeance: the teeth of beasts and scorpions and serpents.*

Consider 2dly, what a description our Lord himself has given us of hell in his gospel, where he calls it *the gehenna of fire, or the fiery gehenna*, *St. Matt. v.* *A fire that cannot be quenched, where their worm dieth not, and their fire is not extinguished: and where every one shall be salted with fire*, *St. Mark ix.* *An eternal fire and everlasting punishment*, *St. Matt. xxv.* *A place of torment in flames*, where the wicked shall not be allowed even so much as one drop of water to cool their tongue, *St. Luke xvi.* *A furnace of fire, where there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth*, *St. Matt. xiii.* *A binding hand and foot, and*

*casting into exterior darkness, St. Matt. xxii. To which St. John adds (Revel. xiv.) that the damned shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God—and shall be tormented with fire and brimstone—and that the smoke of their torments shall ascend up for ever and ever ; and that they have no rest day or night, Revel. xx. That they shall be cast into the pool of fire and brimstone, which is the second death. To which St. Jude also adds darkness and everlasting chains, verse 6. And St. Paul (2 Thess. 1.) that they shall suffer eternal punishment in destruction, from the face of the Lord.*

Consider 3dly, what a dreadful scene of misery and wo is here set before our eyes, in these texts of holy scripture : what a complication of all the worst of evils, and all of them eternal : how many bitter ingredients of this cup of the divine wrath, of which the wicked must drink in hell for evermore. Take a view of them, O my soul, at thy leisure, that the sight of them may imprint in thee a wholesome fear of sin, the only evil that condemns thee to that place of torments. O ! consider well this dying life ; or rather this living death, of the damned : this darksome land ; these dungeons of horror and misery ; this binding hand and foot, in eternal chains ; this pool of fire and brimstone ; this salting with fire ; these devouring flames, which always burn, and yet never consume ; this feeling ever fresh for sufferings ; these gnawing serpents ; this worm that never dies ; this dreadful second death ; this eternal separation from God, and all that is good ; this perpetual weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth, &c. and that all this is endured in the company of devils and other damned wretches ; all hating and cursing one another ; all hating and blaspheming God. And that all these insupportable sufferings, are to be without end, intermission, or remission : ah ! such is hell according to holy writ ; according to God's infallible word : and who can bear the least part of it ?

And shall Christians, that believe the word of God, dare to sin?

Conclude, since thou canst endure so little here, to take the most effectual means thou art able, now whilst thou hast time, to keep thyself from ever coming into this place of torments. The fire of hell can burn nothing but wilful sin. Get rid of this enormous evil, and hell can have no hold on thee.

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*Some other Considerations on Hell.*

July 28. **C**ONSIDER first, that as it is said in holy writ, (1 Cor. ii. 9.) that *eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, what things God hath prepared for them that love him*: so we may also say with truth, that neither eye hath seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of any mortal, to conceive what dreadful torments are prepared in hell for obstinate sinners, that wilfully die enemies of God. The Almighty is infinite in all his attributes: as in his power, wisdom, goodness, &c. so in his avenging justice too. He is a God in hell, as much as in heaven. So that by the greatness of his love, mercy, and patience here, we may measure the greatness of his future wrath and vengeance against impenitent sinners. By his pure goodness and love he has drawn them out of nothing, and made them for himself, and a happy eternity; he has preserved them, and sustained them, for a long time, ever loading them with his benefits; he has even come down from his throne of glory, to seek them when gone astray; he has suffered himself to be nailed to a disgraceful cross, for their eternal salvation; he has frequently delivered them from the dangers to which they were daily exposed; has patiently borne with their repeated insolence and treasons; still graciously inviting them to return to him by repentance; and still offering them his mercy, and all good, both for time and eternity. Ah! how justly then

does his patience and goodness, after being so long abused, turn into fury? His mercy at length gives place to justice: and a thousand woes to those wretches, that must for ever feel the dreadful weight of the avenging hand of the living God.

Consider 2dly, that beatitude, according to divines, is defined, *A perfect and never ending state of happiness, comprising at once all that is good, without the least mixture of evil.* If then damnation be the opposite to beatitude, it must needs be an everlasting deluge of all that is evil, without the least mixture of good, without the least alloy of ease, without the least glimpse of comfort; a total privation of all happiness, and a chaos of all misery.

Consider 3dly, that the misery of the damned is *unchangeable.* Because they carry with them out of this world the enormous guilt of mortal sin; and infinite debt, of which they can never discharge the least part: a dreadful poison, which has tainted and corrupted their whole souls, for which there is now no medicine: a dismal stain, which has penetrated them through and through, and never can be effaced; which is even proof against all the flames of hell, which it continually nourishes; and all the gnawings of the never dying worm, which eternally preys upon it. For as there is no remission of sins in hell, the whole guilt remains unchangeably in the soul with all the debt, and all the stain; and consequently calls without ceasing, for all the wrath of God's avenging justice; which cannot but eternally hate and eternally punish everlasting sin. Oh! how true it is, that this dreadful evil of mortal sin is the very worst of all the ingredients of eternal damnation, and the source and cause of all the rest!

Conclude ever to detest and fly from this monster sin, which is thus odious to thy God, and pernicious to thy soul; and thou shalt have no need to apprehend eternal damnation.



*On the Prison of Hell.*

July 29. **C**ONSIDER first, that hell is a prison, that lies deep in the bowels of the earth, in which the damned are confined for all eternity : a prison, whose gates are eternally shut down, and bolted upon them, by the irreversible decrees of heaven ; so as to prohibit for ever to them all intercourse or communication with the world above : to stop up all access to all manner of good, comfort, or ease, and to shut in with them all that can make them completely miserable. Hell is a dismal dungeon, of black and stinking flames, and crammed brim full with the black and stinking carcasses of the damned, eternally frying in those dark flames. O my soul, what a prison ! What a dungeon ! What dreadful locks and bars, which shut out all good, and admit of nothing of God, but his avenging justice !

Consider 2dly, that this prison of the damned is every way most hideous and loathsome, and full of horror and darkness. No sun, no moon, no stars ever appear in that gloomy region : but a dismal night reigns eternally there ; a night that knows no morning, nor ever expects a return of the dawning of the day. No breath of air from above, no glimpse of light, can ever penetrate into that deep, that bottomless pit. The very fire that rages there is black and darksome : it affords no light to the wretched prisoners, except it be to represent to their eyes such odious objects, as may serve to increase their misery. O who can bear the thought of such a scene of wo !

Consider 3dly, that in this frightful dungeon, the damned are bound down in eternal chains, so that they can neither stir *hand* nor *foot*, (*St. Matt. xxii.*) : in fiery chains, that wrap up their whole bodies, and penetrate them on all sides, and fix them immovably to their place of torments. That head, which by their pride and rebellion, they had lifted up against God, is now eternally nailed down, at an im-

mense distance from him : that stiff neck, which they refused to submit to his sweet yoke, is now loaded with the enormous weight of the chains of hell : and all their senses and members, which they gratified in their life, by indulging them in the false liberty of sinful pleasures, are now condemned to an everlasting confinement and slavery, in links of grinding flames. Oh that sinners would be wise, and would think of these things, and would cease from sin !

Conclude thou, at least, my soul, to take care of one, and whilst thou hast time, to provide effectually for thy eternal welfare ; that thou mayest never come to be cast into this dreadful and everlasting prison.

## On the Entertainment of Hell.

July 30. **C**ONSIDER first, what kind of entertainments are prepared, in a miserable eternity, to succeed the banquets, and revellings, and other extravagances of a voluptuous life, in which worldlings pass the short time of their mortality. O how strangely shall the scene be altered, when immediately after they shall find their souls buried in hell ! Ah ! what kind of feasting shall they meet with there ; what ravenous hunger and thirst, without being ever able to obtain so much as one drop of water ! *Their wine is the gall of dragons, and the venom of asps which is incurable, Deut. xxxii. 33. Their cups are full of the wrath of God, Revel. xiv. Cups of liquid fire, and stinking sulphur. Their gardens of pleasures are turned into a pool of fire and brimstone. Their carnal embraces into the eternal gnawings of infernal serpents, ever preying upon their bosoms.*

Consider 2dly, the musick, with which these wretches shall be for ever entertained in hell : eternal howlings and yellings ; eternal shrieks and groans ; eternal curses and blasphemies ; the insulting voices of the tormentors, scoffing at their sufferings ; the

lashes of their scourges, &c. Ah! unhappy sinners, how shall you like such entertainments as these? Surely if there were nothing else in hell, but the being condemned to an everlasting night, in the midst of all this horror and confusion of so many frightful noises, dismal groans, and horrid blasphemies; any reasonable man would choose the worst of temporal evils, rather than to be condemned to eternity to such a melancholy entertainment.

Consider 3dly, that the sense of smelling, in the damned, shall also have its share in this infernal feast; where it shall be for ever regaled with the loathsome exhalations of those filthy dungeons below; and with the intolerable stench of those half putrified carcasses that are broiling there. And what shall come in to complete the misery of their entertainment, shall be the abominable company, which they must have with them for endless ages, of so many hideous spirits, so many merciless devils; and what shall be worse to them than devils, the unhappy partners of their sins. O what bitter hatred, what hellish rage and fury, shall their former love be now turned into? O how shall they now curse, how shall they tear and torment one another; being eternally chained together, in those black fiery links, which by their dark passions and lusts they have in their life time made for themselves. O worldlings, break then your bonds in sunder now, whilst you have time; withdraw yourselves now from all the objects of your criminal passions, and all disorderly affections; lest if you carry them with you out of this world, they serve for nothing else but to add so many fiery links to your everlasting chains, and to bind you down to as many devils.

Conclude to fly for the future from a voluptuous life, and all the sinful entertainments of the children of this world; *who have their consolation here; and who laugh now, but shall mourn and weep hereafter,* (St. Luke vi) and for thy part to lament henceforward the share thou hast had with them, whilst thou

hast walked on with them in the broad road of a worldly life : and by these penitential tears, joined with a new life, thou shalt escape having a share with them in the entertainments of hell.

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*On the Fire of Hell.*

July 31. **C**ONSIDER first, that in hell, every vice shall meet with its peculiar torment. There the proud shall be debased and confounded, and trodden under foot by insulting devils. There the covetous, and the lovers of the mammon of this world, shall groan under the extremity of want and misery. There the lascivious shall exchange their dark and filthy pleasures for stinking sulphur and black flames. There gluttons and drunkards shall be oppressed with an insupportable hunger and thirst ; and so of the rest. But the general punishment of all the damned, and that which is most frequently inculcated in holy writ, is that they shall *burn* in everlasting *fire*. O who can endure the thought of this *eternal burning*, in that *dreadful pool of fire and brimstone!* Christians, what are you doing ? Do you believe this *eternal fire* ; and do you dare to sin ? If you believe it not, you are no Christians : and if you believe it, and still persist going on in such sins as you know are the high road to this everlasting *burning*, you must be worse than madmen.

Consider 2dly, that of all bodily torments, which we can suffer in this world, there is none more terrible than to burn alive. But alas ! there is no comparison between burning here, and burning in hell. All our fires upon earth, are but painted flames if compared to the fire of hell. The fire of this world was made to serve us, and to be our comfort : that of hell was created to be an instrument of God's vengeance upon sinners. The fire of this world cannot subsist, without being nourished by some combustible matter, which it quickly dispatches and consumes : the fire of hell, kindled by the breath of

an angry God, requires no other fuel than sin, and on this it feeds without ever decaying or consuming. The fire of this world can only reach the body ; but the fire of hell not only pierces the body through and through, in all its members, and penetrates into all the inward parts, with most exquisite tortures ; but also reaches the soul herself, in her very inmost recesses, with its searching flames. Ah ! who could endure such a fire as this even for one moment ? How much less for an endless eternity ?

Consider 3dly, that there is no man upon earth, that has not quite lost his senses, who would be willing, even for the empire of the world, to be broiled like a Laurence, on a gridiron, or roasted for half an hour by a slow fire, though he was sure to come off with his life. Nay, where is the man that would even venture to hold his finger in the flame of a candle for half a quarter of an hour, for any reward this world can give. Where is then the judgment of the greatest part of Christians, who pretend to believe hell fire, and yet live on, with so little apprehension and concern, and that oftentimes for years together, in the guilt of mortal sin, in danger every moment of falling into this dreadful and everlasting fire ; having no more all this while than a hair's breadth, that is, the thin thread of an uncertain life, between their souls and a miserable eternity ? Good God, deliver us from this wretched blindness, from this desperate folly and madness.

Conclude never to expose thyself to the danger of this everlasting fire, by mortal sin, nor to endure any such guilt, though it were even for one moment, lest in that very moment God should break the thread of thy life, and let thee drop into that fire, that shall never be quenched. O what a merey it is of thy God, that it has not been thy case long !

*On the Pain of Loss in Hell.*

Aug. 1. **C**ONSIDER first, that though the fire of hell, with all the rest of the *exterior* torments, which the damned must for ever endure in that woful place, be terrible beyond all that can be expressed or conceived; yet is it no ways comparable, in the judgment of divines, to the *interior* pangs and agonies of the soul, caused by the *pœna damni*, or the eternal loss of God, and of all that is good; and the perpetual sense they shall ever have, of the greatness of this their loss, and of all its dreadful consequences. Alas! they have lost their God for ever; they are divorced eternally from him; they are stript of all his gifts and all his graces; no light is left them in their soul; no glimpse of hope; no sense of good; no power of love either for God or their neighbours. Ah! unhappy wretches, they cannot love! they are excommunicated from God: they are sent into an eternal banishment, far from him, far from his glorious kingdom, and the happy society of his children; far from their true country, and all its blisful joys, which were once purchased for them by the blood of the Son of God. They are eternally separated from the ocean of all good.

Consider 2dly, how much the damned shall resent this most dreadful of all evils, this eternal separation from God. Alas! poor sinners, here, while they lie grovelling in the mire of the earth, diverted from the thought of God by a thousand impertinences, and yet continually partaking, many ways, of his sweetness and goodness in some or other of his creatures, have little or no idea of what it is absolutely to lose God for evermore. But the damned, by their own woful experience, shall be fully convinced, now it is too late, that none of all the rest of the torments of hell can be compared to this loss. God is *an infinite good in himself*; and he is the inexhaustible source of all our good: and of every thing that is in any ways good

in his creatures : he is our *universal good*. In losing him then the damned have lost an *infinite good* ; their first beginning, and their last end, by whom, and for whom, they were created ; they have lost their *sovereign good, their universal good, their immense eternal good* ; the overflowing fountain, the very ocean of all good ; their true and only happiness. They have lost him totally ; they have lost him irrecoverably ; they have lost him eternally : they have lost him in himself ; they have lost him in themselves ; they have lost him in all his creatures. There is an immense gulf between them and him, never, never to be passed.

Consider 3dly, still further, how dreadfully the damned shall be tormented with the perpetual thinking on this most rueful of all losses. Ah ! their lively sense of this most dismal and irreparable loss, and of all the sad consequences of it, shall continually rack their despairing souls ; they shall not be able so much as to turn away their thought one moment from it. For which ever way they shall turn, to seek any one drop of ease, or comfort, in him, or from him, they shall meet with none ; all things shall seem to conspire against them ; all things shall tell them they have lost their God. They shall always find themselves bound down fast in eternal chains, which shall keep them in a state of violence, far away from him ; and all the efforts of their vehement longing after him, shall only serve to redouble their misery. Hence there flow a thousand other evils, that make their whole soul a hell to itself. Hence black despair, sadness, rage, hatred, and blasphemy.

Conclude never to turn away from God in this life, nor to lose him by wilful sin ; and then thou shalt effectually prevent this last and worst of all evils, of being eternally separated from him.

*On the Worm of Hell.*

Aug. 2. **C**ONSIDER first, that as we are assured by the word of God, that the *fire* of hell shall never be quenched; so are we also assured by the same unerring word, that the *worm* of the damned shall never die, St. Mark ix. This never dying worm of a wicked conscience, like a black poisonous serpent shall for ever fasten itself upon their breasts; it shall continually gnaw them; it shall eat its way into their hearts; it shall perpetually prey upon their very souls. O who can conceive the greatness of this torment! This eternal remorse; this most bitter, but fruitless repentance; this dismal melancholy; this extremity of anguish; accompanied with everlasting horror, confusion, and despair! O how hateful, how abominable shall all their former crimes now appear in the eyes of the damned! O how shall they now be convinced, when it is too late, of the enormity of them! O how shall they now detest them!

Consider 2dly, that what eternally feeds this never dying worm, is the enormous guilt of mortal sin; with which the souls of the damned are eternally stained, infected, and corrupted. This dreadful guilt is ever written on their foreheads; it penetrates them on all sides; renders them more ugly and filthy than the very dungeons of hell; eternally odious in the eyes of their Creator; and most intolerable and insupportable to their own selves: the very devils are not more hateful to them, than their own souls are, as long as they see them thus strangely tainted and corrupted, and eternally possessed by this bellish monster; or rather, by as many hellish monsters as they have committed mortal sins. Ah! Christians, see by this what the guilt of mortal sin is! See what the dreadful consequences of it are for eternity! And learn from hence to detest it above all evils. O be assured that hell itself can produce nothing worse!



Consider sadly, what a racking torture it shall be to the damned to all eternity, to be revolving, without ceasing, in their memory, their past folly, stupidity, and madness, in forfeiting the eternal joys of heaven, which they might have obtained at so easy a rate; and selling both their God and their souls for an empty toy, for a filthy satisfaction, that lasted but one moment, and left nothing behind it but guilt and remorse; or for some punctilio of honour, or petty interest, by which they were then robbed of all their true treasures, and all their true honour; and for which they are now reduced to the extremity of all kinds of misery. Oh! what will their judgment be of this cheating world, and of all its short-lived fooleries and vanities, when, after having been millions of years in hell, looking back, and scarce being able to find, in that immense duration, the small point of their mortal life, they shall with most bitter regret be continually comparing together time and eternity; past enjoyments and present punishments; virtue and vice; heaven and hell.

Conclude to keep off from the guilt of wilful sin, and the worm of hell shall never come near thee: it can prey upon nothing but mortal sin.

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*On a miserable Eternity.*

Aug. 3. **C**ONSIDER first, that what above all other things makes hell intolerable, is the eternity of its torments. It is this eternity that is an infinite aggravation to all and every one of them. It is this bitter ingredient, which makes every drop of that cup of the divine vengeance, of which all the damned are forced to drink, so insupportable. Were there so much as the least glimpse of hope that the miseries of the damned should one day have an end, though it were after millions of ages, hell would be no longer hell; because it would admit of some comfort. But for all these inexpressible torments to continue for ever, as long as God shall be God, without the least hope of seeing an end of them; O, this it is

that is the greatest rack of the damned! O, eternity, eternity! how little do worldlings apprehend thee now! How unwilling are they to believe thee (notwithstanding the express declaration of God's unerring word), for fear thou shouldst put a restraint upon their vicious inclinations! O how terrible wilt thou be to them hereafter, when they shall find themselves engulfed in thy bottomless abyss!

Consider 2dly, if one short night seems so long and tedious to a poor sick man in a burning fever; if he tosses and turns, and no where finds rest; if he counts every hour, and with so much impatience longs for the morning, which yet will bring him but little relief or comfort; what must this dreadful night of eternity be, in the midst of all the pains of hell? No man in his senses would purchase a kingdom at the rate of lying for ten years confined to a soft bed without once coming off. Ah! what a misery then must it be to be chained down to a bed of fire, and of such a fire as that of hell is, with all the rest of its torments; not for ten years only, nor for ten thousand times ten years; but for as many hundred thousand millions of ages as there are drops of water in the ocean, or atoms in the air: in a word, for a never-ending eternity!

Consider 3dly, in order to frame a better idea of this miserable eternity, what an immense space of time would be required, for any one of the damned, if he were to shed but one tear in a thousand years, to shed tears enough to fill the sea. The world has not yet lasted six thousand years; so that the first of all the damned would not have shed six tears. And yet, O dreadful eternity! the time shall most certainly come, when any one of those wretches shall be able with truth to say, that at the rate of one tear for a thousand years, he might have shed tears enough, not only to make a sea, but to drown the whole world, and to fill up the vast space between heaven and earth. And yet, alas! after these millions of millions of ages, he shall be as far off from

the end of his misery, as he was the first day he came into that place of woe. Compute after this, if thou pleasest, as many hundred thousand millions of years as thy thoughts can reach to; suppose if thou wilt the whole surface of the earth to be covered with numeral figures; cast up, if thou canst, this prodigious sum of years; and then multiply it by itself; and multiply again a second time the product by itself; and then at the foot of this immense sum, write down, *here begins eternity*. O terrible eternity! Is it possible that they who believe thee should not fear thee? Is it possible that they who fear thee should dare to sin?

Conclude ever to fly with all thy power; for the time to come, all such sins as lead to this miserable eternity: and as to thy past guilt, to take the best care thou art able to wash away now all the stains of thy soul, in the blood of the Lamb, by the means of a hearty repentance, and sincere confession. Penitential tears are capable of effacing those stains at present, which everlasting flames shall never be able to burn away hereafter.

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*On the Happiness of Heaven.*

Aug. 4. **C**ONSIDER first, and ponder well those words of the Apostle, 1 Cor. ii. 9. *That Eye hath not seen, nor Ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, what things God hath prepared for them that love him.* O! what then must this happiness of heaven, what must this eternal glory be, which so far exceeds all our thoughts and conceptions? God is infinite in all his attributes, in his majesty, power, wisdom, justice, &c. but his goodness and mercy, his liberality, bounty, and magnificence, in his gifts and rewards, overflow as it were the banks, and shew themselves in a most extraordinary manner above all his works, *Ps. cxliv.* If then his justice be so terrible, as we have seen, with regard to his enemies; how much more shall his mercy, his goodness, and his bounty, declare them-

selves in favour of his friends? O what then must this blessed kingdom of heaven be, which in his *infinite goodness* he has prepared for his beloved children; which he has contrived by his *infinite wisdom*, and effected by his *infinite power*, for the manifestation of his glory, and for the entertaining them all with an eternal banquet worthy of himself?

Consider 2dly, that if by the cost and price of a thing, we may guess at its worth, we cannot make too advantageous a judgment of the happiness of heaven, the purchasing of which has cost the precious blood and life of the Son of God himself, which is indeed an infinite price: and which, notwithstanding his purchase, is not to be obtained by us, without much pains and labour, without many crosses and sufferings, and without giving up our whole selves in exchange for it: and after all, though we were to labour ever so hard, all our life time, for the acquiring of it, and should give ourselves and all things else for it; yet our labours and all whatsoever we can give, bear so little proportion with the greatness of this happiness, that we are said even so, to receive *this water of life freecost*, Apoc. xxii. 17. Nay, though we should even suffer a thousand deaths for the sake of this eternal life, we are still assured, Rom. viii. 18. *that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with this heavenly glory that is to come.* So much does the bliss of heaven exceed all that we can say, think or conceive.

Consider 3dly, the definition divines give of beatitude, or eternal happiness; when they term it, *a state made perfect, by assembling together, and comprising in itself all good things*: [*Status omnium bonorum aggregatione perfectus*] that is to say, a permanent and everlasting state, replenished with all that is good, without the least mixture of evil; a general and universal good, comprising at once, and for ever, all manner of good things, filling brimfull the vast capacity of the affections and desires of the soul, and eternally securing her from all fear or dan-

ger, of want or change. O, my soul, see then thou turn all thy pursuits after this true and eternal felicity: all things else are but mere toys in comparison with this thy sovereign and universal good.

Conclude with most humble and hearty thanks to the infinite goodness of God, who before thou wast born hath prepared such an eternal happiness for thee, and provided all necessary means for thee to obtain it. But resolve, at the same time, to be diligent in the use of all these means of thy salvation. *For he that made thee without thy concurrence, will not save thee without thy concurrence.* St. Augustine.

*On the good Things of our Lord, in the Land of the Living.*

Aug. 5. **C**ONSIDER first, that the things which are most apt to allure the children of this world, and to draw their affection after them, are honours, riches, and pleasures: but their error is, that they seek these things where they are not to be found, and suffer themselves to be imposed upon by false appearances. *True honours, true riches, and true pleasures, are not to be found in the broad road of the world, nor in the ways of sin; but are to be met with, together with all other good things, in the land of the living.* Here all the inhabitants are advanced to the highest dignity, even to a fellowship with the living God, and a partnership with Jesus Christ in his throne. Here all are most noble, and most renowned; most wise, and most holy. Here all are of blood royal, children and heirs of the King of kings. All are kings and queens, crowned for ever with wreaths of immortal glory; and shining far more brightly than the sun. These are honours indeed; and truly worthy of the Christian's ambition. And all these, O my soul, if thou pleasest, may be thine for ever.

Consider 2dly, the riches that flow in this happy *land of promise.* Where the inhabitants want nothing, covet nothing, and enjoy all things. This

beatitude of the Saints is called in scripture a *kingdom*: and such a *kingdom* indeed is it to all those happy souls, as in plenty of all things, wealth, power, greatness, and endless duration, infinitely exceeds all the kingdoms of the world. It is likened to a *treasure* of immense value, which all the riches of the world are not worthy to purchase. For the riches of this kingdom are of a far superior kind to all earthly treasures: gold and precious stones are valued no more than dirt here, where the inhabitants have the stars under their feet. The great treasure of the Blessed is the eternal possession of God himself, with all his riches. And, O my soul, what more can be desired!

Consider 3dly, that this heavenly land, *flows also for ever with the milk and honey* of pure and immortal delights, pleasures and joys. For here all are eternally *inebriated*, according to the Psalmist, *with the plenty of God's house, and are made to drink of the torrent of his pleasure: for here with him is the fountain of life, &c. Ps. xxxv.* Yea, the great river of the water of life, clear as crystal, which proceeds from the throne of God, and of the Lamb; to water all the streets of the heavenly Jerusalem, having the tree of life growing upon its banks, with all the variety of its excellent fruits, *Apoc. xxii.* And this same is that torrent of pleasure, that eternally flows (bringing with it all these delicious fruits) into the souls of God's servants; quite replenishing them, and filling brimfull all their powers, senses, and faculties, with inconceivable delight. O who would not gladly part with all the satisfactions this world can afford for such immortal pleasures as these!

Conclude to be no longer a slave to worldly toys, vain honours, false riches, and fading pleasures: but to turn away, without loss of time, from this Egypt, that can afford thee nothing but muddy water, incapable to quench thy thirst; and to bend thy course towards thy true country, where thou shalt meet with all thou canst desire, and that for eternity.

*On the Transfiguration of our Lord, St. Matt. xvii.*

Aug. 6. **C**ONSIDER first, how our Lord, *taking with him Peter, James, and John, brought them up into a high mountain apart, and was transfigured before them: so that his face did shine as the sun, and his garments became white as snow. And there appeared to them Moses and Elias, talking with him (concerning his decease that he should accomplish in Jerusalem, Luke ix. 31. Now Peter, being transported with the glory of this vision, cried out, Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias. And as he was yet speaking, behold a bright cloud overshadowed them: and lo a voice out of the cloud, saying: This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased: hear ye him, Matt. xvii.* This transfiguration of our Lord, full of lessons and instructions for us, is honoured by the church in the festival of this day; with a particular view to the raising up the thoughts and hopes of her children, in the midst of the hardships and labours of their mortal pilgrimage, to the eternal repose and glory of their heavenly country; that blessed Jerusalem which the true Israelites must never forget, though constrained as yet, by a miserable captivity, to sit down and weep upon the banks of the rivers of Babylon, and lament their distance from the house of God in Zion.

Consider 2dly, in this mystery of the transfiguration of our Lord, how wonderfully he was here pleased to confirm our faith: as well by the joint testimonies of the law and the prophets, bearing witness to the gospel, represented by the glorious apparition of Moses and Elias with Christ; as by the testimony of God himself, in all the three persons; by the voice of the Father, by the glory of the Son, and by the manifestation of the Holy Ghost in the bright cloud. See how he was pleased, by the same glory of his transfiguration, to encourage all his followers

to bear with patience the afflictions, labours, crosses, and persecutions of this life, in hopes of a share in that eternal glory, of which he has given us as it were a sketch in this mystery: ever remembering that of the apostle, (2 Cor. iv. 17.) *that our present tribulation, which is momentary and light, worketh for us above measure exceedingly an eternal weight of glory.* But O let us take along with us that other lesson also, which we are taught by the voice of the heavenly Father, in the transfiguration of our Lord, that the true way to a happy eternity, and to all good, is ever to hear and to obey the Son of God.

Consider 3dly, how St. Peter, being out of himself, with the joy of this vision, was desirous to be always in the same happy situation, and always enjoying the like glory; and therefore he cried out, *Lord, it is good for us to be here; not knowing*, saith St. Luke, *what he said*, c. ix. 33. Because, though it was inconceivably delightful to see and enjoy (though for a short time) the least glimpse of heavenly light and glory: yet, as this present life was not to be the time of enjoyment, but of labours, and of sufferings, and the Son of God himself was to enter into his glory by labours and sufferings (*Luke xxiv. 26.*); it was inordinate to desire here for a continuance, that which was reserved for hereafter, and for such only as should be entitled to it by labours and sufferings. Learn from hence, O my soul, with regard to divine consolations, and such like favours, that though thou art to receive them, when given, with humility, gratitude, and love; admiring the goodness and bounty of God, who is pleased thus to look down upon thee, the most unworthy of sinners: yet art thou not to set thy heart upon them; nor to be disturbed and discouraged when they are taken away: for merit and perfection consists not in them; but in working, suffering, and loving: and for the time of this mortal life, ordinarily speaking, it is far better for thee to be with thy



Lord upon Mount Calvary, than upon Mount Thabor.

Conclude, instead of being eager after these transitory consolations, which at the best are but as small drops of water, that fall from the clouds of heaven, to refresh us for a moment in this dry desert, through which we are now travelling, to aspire rather continually after that great overflowing river above, which gives joy without end to the city of God; and which alone is capable of fully quenching thy thirst, and satisfying thy soul.

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*On the Glory of the heavenly Jerusalem.*

Aug. 7. **C**ONSIDER first, how glorious and beautiful those mansions are that are prepared for the eternal abode of the servants of God in the heavenly Jerusalem. *How lovely are thy tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts,* cries out the royal prophet, *Ps. lxxxiii. My soul longeth and fainteth for the courts of the Lord.* The beauty and glory of this city of God, every way correspond with the riches, bounty, and magnificence of this almighty monarch, who has built it for the manifestation of his power, wisdom, and goodness: and for to be the eternal habitation of his dearest friends and children. And what great things will he not do, when both his own glory, and his love for us, call upon him to exert himself? See, my soul, how noble a palace he has given us here below, even in this place of our banishment; beautified with this sun, moon, and stars; accomplished and furnished with this almost infinite variety of minerals, plants, flowers, trees, and living creatures, in the earth, air, and waters, all subservient to man; and all wonderfully beautiful in their kinds, &c. If then he has so richly provided for us in this vale of tears, in this *region of the shade of death*; what must our eternal habitation be in the *land of the living*? If here he is so bountiful, even to his enemies, in affording them so commodious, and

so noble a dwelling, what may not his friends and children expect, in his eternal kingdom; where alone, according to the prophet, *our Lord is magnificent*, Isai. xxxiii. 21.

Consider 2dly, how the scripture, to accommodate itself to our low way of thinking, describes the glory and beauty of this heavenly city, by representing it to us under the figures of such things as we most admire here below: when it tells us that the walls of this city of God are built with precious stones, and that its streets are of pure and transparent gold: that these streets are watered with the bright crystal streams of the river of the water of life, flowing from the throne of God; and that on the banks of this river, on both sides, grows the tree of life; that there shall be no night, nor any want of sun or moon; but that God himself shall be its everlasting light; and that every one of the just shall shine like the sun, &c. O how *glorious* are these *things* that are *said of thee*, O *city of God*! Ps. lxxxvi. But O how much more glorious are those great things that are veiled under these figures.

Consider 3dly, that *Jerusalem* is interpreted, *the sight or vision of peace*: and therefore this name is given to the city above, because there alone is the true seat of *eternal peace*. There is *the Tabernacle of God with men, and he shall dwell with them—and he shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and death shall be no more, nor mourning, nor crying, nor sorrow shall be any more, for the former things are passed away*, Apocal. xxi. 3, 4. No heats, no colds, no rain, no storms, no diseases, no pains, no conflicts, or adversities of any kind, have any access to this city, or can ever come near this blessed abode. But a most bright day, a most serene calm, an everlasting peace perpetually reigns here: *a solid peace, a peace never to be disturbed, but always secure, a peace both within and without, a peace every way firm.* Kempis.

Conclude ever to aspire after this blessed Jerusa-

lem; and to despise all earthly toys in comparison with this heavenly city. O how good is our God, who has prepared such lovely and everlasting mansions for us! O blessed for ever by all his creatures be his infinite goodness!

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*On the happy Society of the heavenly Jerusalem.*

Aug. 8. **C**ONSIDER first, the multitude, beauty, and glory of the inhabitants of this blessed Jerusalem: those millions of millions of bright heavenly spirits, that always surround the throne of God, as we learn from the vision of the prophet *Daniel vii. Thousands of thousands minister to him, and ten thousand times a hundred thousand stand before him*: that immense number of Cherubims and Seraphims, all on fire with divine love: that infinite multitude of Saints and Martyrs, and other servants of God, of both sexes, gathered out of all nations, tribes, and tongues; and above them all the blessed Virgin mother of God, the queen of Saints and Angels. The number of these heavenly citizens is innumerable. They are all ever beautiful and ever young: they are all most bright and most glorious: they wear the name of God on their foreheads, expressed by the unalterable serenity, joy, peace, and light, that shines from their countenance. The very sight of any one of them, as we learn from the experience of some of the Saints and servants of God, is enough to ravish the soul into an extacy, and to fill it with inexpressible delight: and what shall it be to see them all, and to enjoy their happy society for all eternity!

Consider 2dly, that one of the most happy things that a good Christian could meet with, or desire on this side of eternity, would be to live quite separated from the company and conversation of the wicked, and of all the fools and the slaves of this world, and to converse only with the wise and with the holy; and to be joined with them, in a perfect band of fraternal charity, friendship, and union. O how

good and how pleasant it is, says the Psalmist, for brethren to dwell together in unity, Ps. cxxxii. But O what company, what conversation, what friendship here upon earth, how pure soever, can bear any comparison with that of the blessed in heaven! for there we shall meet with millions of millions of brethren and friends, all most loving, all most wise, all most holy; in a word, all full of God. Their communications one with another are most pure; their conversation most sublime and heavenly: the praises of God, and his eternal truths, are their perpetual theme: harmonious hymns of divine love are their constant entertainmept.

Consider 3dly, more in particular, the inexpressible charity and love which the blessed have for one another: which is so great, that they all have but one heart and one soul. This makes them take such an inconceivable delight in each others happiness, through the love they bear each other; as to look upon the happiness of their brethren as their own, and to rejoice in it as if it were their own. So that by means of this their heavenly charity, the joy and satisfaction of every individual is multiplied to as many fold as there are Angels and blessed souls in heaven. O how lovely is this heavenly friendship! O let us aspire after this happy society! let us aim, as much as human weakness will permit, at an imitation of this blessed charity, by rejoicing at every real good we discover in our neighbours as if it were our own; and by inviting all we can to join with us here in the love and praises of God, and in the practice of all other virtues, that so both we and they may hereafter be happily united together, associated for eternity, in singing to our Lord the immortal songs of Sion.

Conclude, if thou desirest to be eternally happy in the society of the Saints in the heavenly Sion, to flee now from the midst of the Babylon of a wicked world; and to associate thyself, as much as thou canst, with the true servants of God. There is nothing will be of more service to thy soul during thy mortal pilgrimage.

*On the eternal Enjoyment of God.*

Aug. 9. **C**ONSIDER first, that although the kingdom of heaven abounds with all that can be imagined good and delightful, yet there is but one sovereign good, in the enjoyment of which consists the essential beatitude of heaven, and that is God himself; whom the blessed ever see, *as he truly is face to face*; and see him in the very centre of their own souls; and by the eternal *contemplation* of his infinite beauty and truth, together with all his divine attributes and attractions, they are quite ravished, and set on fire with seraphic flames of eternal love: by means of this contemplation and love, they are closely united, by a most pure and amiable union, with this sovereign and infinite good, and they eternally enjoy him: he surrounds and penetrates them on all sides with inexpressible delights; he fills their whole souls with himself, the overflowing source of all good: he gives himself to them, to be their joy, their treasure, their never ending bliss; he transforms them in a manner into himself: as when brass or iron in the furnace is perfectly penetrated by the fire, it loseth in a manner its own nature, and becomes all flame and fire. O happy creatures! what can be wanting to complete your joys, who have within, and without you, the immense ocean of endless felicity?

Consider 2dly, that what makes God himself infinitely and eternally happy, is the eternal knowledge, love, and enjoyment of himself. For God himself is his own happiness: nothing less than his own immense divinity could ever make him happy. See, then, my soul, the infinite riches of the bounty and goodness of thy God, who giveth his servants, in reward of their loyalty, so great a good, that nothing greater can be given: even God himself can give nothing greater; since he giveth himself to them, to be their possession and eternal inheritance; and what can be given greater than himself? O shall not

that suffice, my soul, to make thee happy, which maketh God himself happy? Who then can be able to conceive the least part of the joy, peace, and pleasure which that soul must experience, that sees herself thus full of God and enjoying him! O how happily does she here lose herself, drowned in an ocean of delights! an immense ocean, where she can neither find surface, nor bottom, nor any shore, because it is on every side incomprehensible and infinite.

Consider 3dly, in what manner all the powers of these blessed souls, which are thus full of God, are eternally employed. Their *understanding*, elevated by the light of glory, and *in this light of God, seeing God the light*, ever contemplates, with infinite delight, this sovereign and universal truth; and in him sees all truths; penetrates into the secrets of God, and the sublimest mysteries; and is even let in to the closet of his heart, to see there the immense treasure of his love for us, and all the wonders he works in time and eternity, in consequence of this love. Their *memory* is continually occupied with the remembrance of all their God has ever done for them; his creating them, out of his own pure goodness, for the eternal enjoyment of himself; his redeeming them with the blood of his divine Son, and through him opening to them an inexhaustible source of mercy, grace, and all good; his manifold preservations, by which he has so often delivered them both from a temporal and an eternal death: and his innumerable other benefits, and distinguishing favours. Their *will* all set on fire with the sight of the infinite beauty, and infinite goodness of their God, loves him without ceasing, and without measure; and perfectly consumes herself in the flames of an eternal love: she lays fast hold on this her sovereign good, she embraces him, she eternally adheres to him, and by a thrice happy union, she becomes in a manner the same thing with her divine lover.

Conclude to employ here all the powers of thy

soul upon God, by the practice of mental prayer and recollection : and to accustom them now to that kind of exercise, which thou hopest shall be their eternal occupation. Thus mayest thou in some measure anticipate here upon earth the joys of heaven, by contemplation and love.

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*On St. Laurence.*

Aug. 10. **C**ONSIDER first, how St. Laurence being archdeacon to the holy Pope Xystus, in the time of the persecution of the church, under the heathen emperor Valerian, seeing his holy bishop led away to martyrdom, and himself left behind, addressed himself to him in these words : *Whither art thou going, O father, without thy son ? Whither art thou hastening, O holy priest, without thy deacon ? Thou wast never accustomed to offer sacrifice without me thy minister : try me then now, and make the experiment, whether thou hast chosen a fit minister, to whom thou hast committed the dispensing the blood of our Lord.* To whom the holy Pope replied : *I am not going to leave thee, my son, nor to forsake thee, but only am going a little before thee : after three days thou shalt follow me. I am old, and therefore my conflict is more light and easy : but thou art young, and shalt sustain far greater conflicts for the love of Christ, and shalt triumph in a more glorious manner over the tyrant.* See, my soul, what a spirit animated these blessed martyrs, what an ardour they had to suffer for the love of Christ : and let it be thy grief, to find so very little in thyself of these holy dispositions.

Consider 2dly, that what made St. Laurence so great a saint, was his divine charity : that is to say, his ardent love for his God, and for his neighbour. His charity for his neighbour was evinced as well by his diligent discharge of his office in the care and support of all the poor of the city, as by his distributing amongst them, in the time of the persecution, all the plate and treasures of the church coun-

mitted to his charge. His fervent love of God was evidenced, by that invincible courage and fortitude with which he endured the worst of torments, even with cheerfulness and joy, because he was suffering for the sake of his beloved. His love was truly stronger than death: and the fire, with which he was outwardly broiled on the gridiron, was no ways to be compared with the flames of divine love which were enkindled within his soul; and which made him proof against all the efforts of his enemies, and victorious over all the powers of earth and hell. O! it is divine charity that makes saints: it is love: it is an ardent love of God and our neighbours that carries souls to heaven. O let us but love as we ought, and as we are all strictly bound to love, and we shall be all saints: and he that loves the most shall be the greatest saint. O teach us, dear Lord, but this divine art of love, and in all things else do with us what thou wilt.

Consider 3dly, the great lessons given us in the gospel of this festival, *St. John* xii. 24, &c. In which we are taught by our Lord, that the grain of corn must die, before it can bring forth fruit: that he that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world, shall keep it unto life eternal: that the minister, or servant of Christ, must follow him; and that where he is, there also his minister shall be: and that if any one shall duly minister to Christ, he shall be honoured by his Father. See, my soul, thou study well these gospel lessons: see that thou learn to die to thy self-love, to thy own will, to thy disorderly passions, and sensual inclinations, by the practice of daily self-denial and mortification; and then thou shalt bring forth much fruit. We must all be so far at least martyrs of Christ, as to die to ourselves for the love of him. Thus we shall be his servants and ministers indeed: thus we shall follow him; and where he is, we shall also be: thus we shall come to be eternally honoured by his heavenly Father.



Conclude to honour this glorious martyr St. Lawrence, by an imitation of his fervour, zeal, and constancy in the cause of God; and of his ardent love for God and his neighbour. And learn from the consideration of the grievous torments the martyrs have endured for Christ, to suffer, with patience at least, whatever share there shall be allotted to thee in the cross of Christ.

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*On the Endowments of the glorified Bodies in Heaven.*

Aug. 11. **C**ONSIDER first, that as the body and soul are individual companions and partners in this life, in the good or evil we do; so shall they be in the rewards or punishments of the next. Hence, besides the essential beatitude of the soul, consisting in the eternal sight and enjoyment of God; and the happy exercise of all the powers of the soul, employed eternally about him; the body also of the servants of God shall meet with its eternal reward in heaven, and with such, and so happy a reward, as no human understanding can be able to conceive. These bodies of ours, at the resurrection, shall be most wonderfully changed. *This corruptible, says the apostle, 1 Cor. xv. must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. And again, it is sown in corruption, it shall rise in incorruption: it is sown in dishonour, it shall rise in glory: it is sown in weakness, it shall rise in power: it is sown a natural body, it shall rise a spiritual body. Spiritual, not in its substance, (for it is still a body, and not a spirit) but in its qualities; like the body of Christ, after his resurrection, penetrating through the doors that were shut, and all other obstacles, cloathed with perpetual health, strength, vigour, and youth; swift as thought, immortal, and impassible.*

Consider 2dly, the glory and beauty of these heavenly bodies, far exceeding all earthly glory and beauty. *The just, saith our Lord, shall shine like*

*the sun, in the kingdom of their Father, Matt. xiii. 43.* Yea, the very least of God's servants, in that eternal kingdom, shall be far more resplendent and beautiful than any thing that can be seen by mortal eye here below, or represented by man's imagination. But O how happy then shall the eyes of the blessed be, that shall be eternally entertained with the sight of all these heavenly beauties; every one of which is so charming and ravishing to behold! O how happy shall those eyes be, which shall be perpetually fed with the view, at once, of all that is delightful in the new heavens and the new earth! And what again is all this, in comparison with the happiness of their eternal contemplation of the great King of Beauty himself, and King of Glory Jesus Christ; whom they shall always see, in all his beauty, and in all his glory?

Consider 3dly, that the other bodily senses shall also have their reward in heaven, not by their enjoying there any of those gross or brutal pleasures, which carnal and worldly minded men are so fond of: which are so apt to defile the soul, and can give her no true satisfaction: but by the eternal experience of pleasures of quite another nature, pure and immortal, which shall affect all the senses, and fill them with unspeakable delight, from the most delicious sweets of the heavenly paradise. And as for the *hearing* in particular, it shall be for ever entertained with an unspeakable harmony, formed by the melodious concerts of all the celestial choirs; and the united voices of millions of millions of heavenly citizens, all sweetly singing together divine hymns of eternal praise and love to their ever glorious and ever loving King. O, my soul, the hearing of any one of these heavenly voices, could it be allowed us here, would certainly be enough to ravish any mortal with inexpressible delight! And what must it be, eternally to hear them all?

Conclude to admire and adore the infinite bounty and goodness of thy God, who not content with

giving the soul so great a reward, as the eternal enjoyment of the Sovereign Good, which is himself; has been pleased to prepare such excellent gifts and endowments for the body, to make it also eternally happy. But then thou must remember that if thou would secure to thy body these heavenly endowments, and all this happiness for endless ages, thou must keep it pure and holy during this mortal life, and ever mortify its disorderly appetites and carnal inclinations.

*On a happy Eternity.*

Aug. 12. **C**ONSIDER first, that what completes the happiness of the servants of God in his heavenly kingdom, is the eternity, and the absolute security of all their enjoyments, in every branch of their bliss. Their joys are even linked with God's eternity; and by the unalterable decrees of his divine love, they can no more cease to be happy, than he can cease to be God. The honours, riches, and pleasures of this world, are all, alas, short and momentary: could they even continue with us for the whole time of our life, (which is seldom, or never the case) they could be of no better condition than this our mortal life, which is but a *vapour, which appeareth for a little while*, and presently *vanishes*, and is seen no more, *St. James iv. 15.* And though we would give the whole world to secure to ourselves but one day of the enjoyment of them, we should not be able to purchase any such security. How long, then, O ye children of men, will you be in love with these empty vanities? How long will you suffer yourselves to be imposed upon with lies and deceits? Give but your hearts in earnest to God: give yourselves up to divine love; and instead of these vain worldly toys, which at the best you can only enjoy for an uncertain moment, you shall secure to yourselves *all good* from your God for endless ages.

Consider 2dly, Christian soul, and look forward

into this immense eternity, of incomprehensible and never ending felicity, which is prepared for thee in heaven, to reward thy fidelity in the love and service of thy God, and to recompense the short labours and sufferings of thy mortal life. O what a pleasure it is, to lose ones self in the happy prospect of this boundless ocean of eternity! O what an unspeakable joy, to think of being *for ever* plunged into the immense abyss of the divinity itself! What a delight, to be counting up millions of millions, of millions of ages, crowned with all the honours, riches, and enjoyments of the heavenly paradise; and after all, to find ourselves no nearer the end of this felicity, than when one first set out. The thought of this blessed eternity, inspired St. Teresa, when yet an infant, with a contempt of all those things that pass away with time; and with a desire of giving up her life for the love of Christ; she often repeated with great feeling those words, *For ever, For ever, For ever*, and in the meditation on these eternal years, a bright fire of devotion was enkindled in her soul. O let the like thought inspire us with the like affections.

Consider 3dly, that in this eternal bliss there is not only an absolute security of their joys never having an end; but also an assurance that they shall never suffer the least decay or diminution, or any ways become tedious, or less agreeable, by the infinite length of the possession of them. For as the God, whom the blessed perpetually enjoy, is every way infinite and incomprehensible, being an immense ocean of all good, and an inexhaustible treasure of all happiness: so the joy, pleasure, and delight of those that eternally enjoy him, is ever fresh, and ever new, and continually fills the whole capacity, and fully satisfies the whole appetite of their souls. O! how *blessed then must they be, that dwell in thy house, O Lord! For ever and ever they shall praise thee, Ps. lxxxiii.* O! how *lovely are thy tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts! My soul longeth and*

*fainteth for the courts of the Lord.* Yes, my soul thirsteth after this fountain of eternal life, which is with her God, and which perpetually inebriates all his heavenly guests, flowing without ceasing into their happy breasts.

Conclude to despise henceforward all that is earthly and transitory ; and from this hour to set out, and to begin thy journey towards this glorious, heavenly, and eternal kingdom. There thou shalt find all that thy heart can desire ; immortal honours, never failing riches ; pure and everlasting pleasures. There thou shalt meet with beauties that never fade, perpetual health, perpetual life, &c. O this alone is thy true home, the land of the living !

*On Conformity with the Will of God.*

Aug. 13. **C**ONSIDER first, that a conformity of our will in all things with the holy will of God, is the sovereign perfection of a Christian life : inasmuch as it is the very perfection of divine love, and charity, which is the queen of virtues. For there can be no greater love, than to have no other will than the will of our divine lover ; so as ever to adore in all things his holy will, ever to embrace and love his holy will. This kind of love is perfect indeed : it resembles the love of the angels and saints of heaven. The most acceptable offering we can make to God, out of our poor stock, is that of our will : whatsoever else we give him, as long as we keep any part of our will from him, will never content him : he claims our *whole* will, without reserve, when he says, *My son, give me thy heart*, Prov. xxiii. Now this we give him, when we conform our will in all things with his blessed will. But if we refuse to submit our will, in any thing, to his holy will, we refuse him our heart ; or at the best we only offer him a divided heart, which he will never accept of. O my God, let my *whole heart* be ever thine ! Let my *whole soul* be ever subject to thee. Let my will be

ever a faithful servant, and a true lover of thy ever blessed and holy will.

Consider 2dly, the great advantages that come to our souls from a perfect conformity with the will of God. It gives a certain dignity and perfection to all, even the meanest of our actions; and to all our sufferings, by making the will of God the rule of them all. It *purifies* our intention in all things, by continually directing the eye of the soul towards God. It brings with it a certain uprightness, and simplicity of heart, which is highly agreeable to God: it makes us even, as the scripture says of David, men *according to God's own heart*. It places the soul in the hands of God, for him to dispose of her in all things, according to his holy will and pleasure. It brings along with it a perfect peace and tranquillity of mind, in all events, as being all ordered and directed by him, who is infinitely good, and infinitely wise; and who orders all things for the good of them who cast their whole care upon him, and seek to have no other will but his. O blessed conformity, how rich, how sweet, and delicious to the soul are thy happy fruits! Thou makest us enjoy even a heaven upon earth.

Consider 3dly, that this conformity of the soul with the will of God, rids her of all her evils, and puts her in possession of all other virtues. It is the sovereign means to bring all our passions into *order* and subjection, and to mortify all our *irregular* inclinations: for that which makes them *disorderly* and *irregular* is their opposition to, or their resistance of the will of God: whereas this blessed conformity obliges them all to stoop down, and submit to his sacred will. It *humbles* the soul under the mighty hand of God: it teaches her to be *meek* under all injuries, affronts, and provocations, considering them all as coming from the just appointments of heaven: it makes her willing to take up her cross, and to bear it till death, with perfect *patience* and resignation:

in a word, it teaches her to be *obedient unto death*.  
 O grant us, dear Lord, this blessed conformity.

Conclude to set a great esteem upon this excellent virtue of conformity with the will of God. It is the greatest treasure thou canst enjoy in this mortal pilgrimage. But then it is not to be obtained without thy being in earnest in seeking it, fervent in praying for it, and ready to part with thy own will and humour for the purchasing of it.

*On the Motives that oblige us to a perpetual Conformity with the Will of God.*

Aug. 14. **C**ONSIDER first, that all kind of motives concur in recommending to a Christian this best of all devotions, which has for its object the holy will of God. It is our greatest honour and glory ever to follow God, to submit to him, to be servants of his divine will, to be servants of his divine love; to be so closely united to him, as to have no other will but his. It is our greatest interest, to conform ourselves in all things with his blessed will; it brings with it all kind of good to our souls, both for time and eternity: for by giving up our will without any reserve to God, we engage him to give himself without reserve to us. It is the source of the greatest, and indeed the only true and solid pleasures, to embrace the will of God in all things; for as much as it unites the soul with the fountain of all sweetness, which is God. The will of God is always right, always wise, always good, always beautiful, &c. The will of God is God himself. What motives then have we not to conform ourselves continually with this ever right, ever wise, ever good, ever beautiful will, of our ever loving God! How wicked it is to rebel against his sovereign will! How mad it is for us to pretend to withdraw ourselves from the will of the *Almighty*.

Consider 2dly, that the only business for which we came into this world, is to do in all things the holy

will of God. The Son of God had no other business during his mortal life, than to do the will of his Father. *I came down from heaven, (says he, John vi. 38.) not to do my own will, but the will of him that sent me.* And Ps. xxxix. *In the head of the book,* says he, *it is written of me, that I should do thy will : O my God, I have desired it—in the midst of my heart.* In this same great book of life, it is written also of all the children of God, that they likewise should do the will of their heavenly Father : this is the test by which we are all to be examined : all they that with Jesus Christ, *desire in the midst of their hearts*; and like him, embrace and love the holy will of God, and always conform themselves to it, shall be acknowledged for the true children of God, and the brethren of Jesus Christ : but as many as shall revolt, and fall off from their allegiance to the blessed will of God, shall have their name blotted out of the book of life. See then, my soul, that the true way to heaven, is to conform thyself with the divine will.

Consider 3dly, that by all manner of titles, God claims of us a conformity with his heavenly will. He claims it as our Creator ; because he made us to serve him, and gave us our will, with the rest of the powers of the soul, only to be employed in the service of his holy will. With what face then can we refuse him the sacrifice of that will, which he made for himself ? Or how can we pretend that his divine will should at any time stoop to our silly will ; and not rather we give up at all times our whole will, by a perfect conformity to the will of our Creator ? The Son of God also claims our will, as our *Redeemer*, by the title of purchase ; because he has ransomed our souls, enslaved before to Satan and sin, and bought them for himself and his Father, at a great price, even with his own most precious blood. So that our will ought to be always at his disposal, as his property ; and therefore ought ever to conform itself with



his blessed will. The Holy Ghost also claims our will, by the title of *sanctification*: because our whole soul has been at our baptism dedicated, sanctified, and consecrated by the Spirit of God, to be the eternal temple of God. And therefore our will, which is the principal power of the soul, and which commands the rest, is strictly bound to be ever obedient to the will of him, who has chosen and sanctified it for himself.

Conclude to give always to God, what upon so many titles belongs wholly to him: and never more to be a rebel to the will of God; or to give the preference to thy own will, or any other creature, before the will of God.

*On the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin.*

Aug. 15. **C**ONSIDER first, in the festival of this day, and contemplate in spirit the glorious entry of the blessed Virgin Mary, the mother of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ, into the everlasting kingdom of her Son. See, my soul, with what joy of the whole court of heaven; with what triumphs, with what heavenly hymns she was escorted thither by legions of angels: see how all the citizens of heaven went forth to meet her: with what affectionate embraces she was welcomed by her divine Son, and presented by him to his Eternal Father; see how she was placed above all the angels and saints; above all the cherubims and seraphims, on a most glorious throne; the highest in heaven next to that of her Son, and crowned by him with a diadem of such supereminent brightness and glory, as it is not to be expressed nor conceived. Rejoice, O my soul, in this glorious assumption of the *mother of thy Lord*, who, as he has been pleased to make us his brethren, has been pleased to make her also *our mother*. O what a happiness it is for us, to have such a *mother* (who has so great interest with the King of heaven, and who takes our welfare so much to heart,) so near the

throne of all mercy and grace! O blessed Virgin, graciously look upon us in this our banishment, and always shew thyself a mother to us.

Consider 2dly, what brought this ever blessed Virgin to this supereminent glory, which we honour in this festival of her Assumption. 1. It was her most profound *humility*: she was exalted above all, because she was the most humble of all. For he that humbleth himself the most upon earth, shall be the most exalted in heaven. 2. It was her perfect *purity* of soul and body, mind and heart, from all the defilements of sin. 3. It was principally her supereminent *love of God*: for the degree of the enjoyment of God, in his eternal glory, is ever proportioned to the degree of our love of God in this mortal life. If then we hope one day to follow this blessed Virgin to heaven, and to have a share in the glory of her Assumption, we must endeavour to imitate her humility, her purity, and her love of God. No soul can ever ascend to heaven by any other way, than that of humility, purity, and the love of God.

Consider 3dly, that this imitation of the virtues of the blessed Virgin, is an excellent way of honouring her, and of shewing our real esteem, love, and devotion to her: For how can we better testify our affection and veneration for the saints of God, than by honouring and loving in them, that which made them saints; and that which God himself honours and loves in them? that is, their virtues? or how can we better express our esteem and love for their virtues, than by studying to imitate them? This kind of devotion is most pleasing to the saints, and to the queen of the saints, and to the God of the saints: it is most honourable to them, and most profitable to ourselves. This will bring us effectually to the eternal society of the saints, which, without this, no other devotion can secure unto us.

Conclude so to rejoice in the exaltation of our blessed Lady, in this day of her glory, as to take up on this day a generous resolution of walking in her

footsteps, by a diligent imitation of her life : but more especially by following the great example of her humility, purity, and love of God. This generous resolution of thine will be so agreeable to her, as to add a new satisfaction and joy to the immense felicity she possessed before.

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*On the Gospel read on the Festival of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin, Luke x. 30, &c.*

Aug. 16. **C**ONSIDER first, how our Lord going *into a certain town, a certain woman named Martha received him into her house : and she had a sister called Mary, who sat also at the Lord's feet, and heard his word, &c.* O how happy, my soul, were these holy sisters, who had it thus in their power to receive the Lord of Glory into their house, to entertain him there, to hear his word, to converse familiarly with him, and to minister to him! O how happy should we have been, if we had lived at that time, and could have been favoured in the like manner! But stay, my soul, and see if this same Lord does not offer thee the like favours at present; and if it be not entirely thy own fault, if thou art not a great saint, in consequence of them. For does he not still abide amongst us in the blessed sacrament? Does he not there come in person into our house? Does he not bring all his treasures of divine grace with him, to enrich our souls? May we not, by a spiritual communion, invite him to us, whenever we please? May we not, by a spirit of recollection and mental prayer, entertain him, and converse with him as long as we please? Does he not often visit us with his graces? Does he not often stand at the door of the heart and knock? Have we not his heavenly word with us? May we not minister to him when we please, and serve him in the persons of the poor? Which service he declares he looks upon as done to himself. If so, what reason have we to regret our not having lived at the

time of our Saviour, seeing he is always living with us.

Consider 2dly, how very differently these two holy sisters were then employed; the one being *busy about much serving*, and full of care in providing for the entertainment of our Lord; the other sitting still at his feet, and quietly attending to his divine word. And yet they were both employed about him; they both dedicated themselves to his love and service. In this, they represent to us two different kinds of lives of the servants of God, the *active* and the *contemplative*; or, if you please, two different kinds of function of a Christian life, the one consisting in *action*, the other in *contemplation*; the one in a variety of good works, done with a good intention, for the service of Christ; the other in a more quiet retirement and recollection, and a more close attention to God, by mental prayer. Both of these are good; both of them highly commendable: because both of them tend to the love and service of God: but the latter is preferred by the judgment of truth itself: because it makes that its occupation here, which is to be its eternal employment hereafter. *Mary has chosen the better part, which shall not be taken from her.* Learn thou, my soul, of Martha, ever to direct thy common actions, with all the functions and labours of thy calling, by a pure intention, to the service of Christ. Learn to sanctify them all by calling in Mary, that is, recollection and prayer, to thy assistance. But learn also of Mary, to retire as often as thou canst, from the noise and hurry of the world, to the feet of Christ: learn of her, as often as thou hast thy choice, to choose that better part of contemplation and love, which is to be thy eternal occupation.

Consider 3dly, that this gospel is applied by the church to the Blessed Virgin, and to her Assumption: because she was the happy woman, that *received*, in an extraordinary manner, *Christ into her house*: she perfectly fulfilled in her life, both the

functions of Martha and of Mary: of Martha, in the services she rendered to our Lord, in his humanity, for all the thirty years he was under her roof; and of Mary, by the perpetual contemplation and love of his divinity: so that even in the midst of the duties of the active life, the eye of her heart was always upon her God; she ever attended the *one thing necessary*, she ever made *choice of the better part*, and on this day of her exaltation she was put in full possession of it for eternity: according to that, *Mary has chosen the better part, which shall not be taken from her.*

Conclude, O my soul, to follow her great example in choosing always the better part, that thou mayest partake in her everlasting happiness.

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*On Resignation to the Will of God, in all our Sufferings.*

Aug. 17. **C**ONSIDER first, that it is a most certain truth, that nothing happens in the world, excepting sin, which does not come directly from the hand of God, and which is not the effect of his holy will. So that all our sufferings, of what kind soever they may be, are all ordained by him, and all thus pass through his hands, before they can reach us. Which is so true, that even those sufferings, which seem to be brought upon us immediately by the wickedness of men, are in effect all of them sent by the ordinance of God: who though he abhors whatsoever there is of malice and sin in the will, or design of the men, or devils, whom he suffers to afflict or persecute us, yet most certainly, he not only permits, but absolutely wills, the afflictions, trials, or punishments, which we suffer on these occasions. And it is his intention, and our duty, that in all these sufferings, we should not look so much at the visible hand of the unjust creature, as at the invisible hand of the just God: and that in all these cases we should in such manner detest the malice or wickedness of the men that afflict us, as ever to submit to,

and even to embrace the chastisements of the Lord, as of a tender Father, who often makes use of a rod, for the correction of his children, which he afterwards casts into the fire. O how resigned should we be, if we always remembered these truths!

Consider 2dly, that all our sufferings not only come to us from the hand of God, but are also all designed by him for our greater good. He is the best of Fathers: his fatherly providence, and his tender love for us, exceeds all that we can express or conceive: the holy scriptures are full of repeated declarations of this truth; it cannot be called in question without contradicting both the divine word, and the perpetual experience of the servants of God. So that we ought to be always fully assured, considering God's infinite wisdom, goodness, and love for us, that all that he sends is for the best, and is indeed the best for us. See, my soul, that thou always rememberest this truth, in all thy pains, sicknesses, crosses, and afflictions; and in general in all things that happen to thee contrary to thy desire, expectation, or inclination. Upon all these occasions thou must consider Jesus Christ himself as offering thee this cup, or this cross, desiring thee to receive it for his sake; and assuring thee that it shall be the means to bring thee to heaven. O! how true it is, as we shall clearly see one day in the light of God, that these very things, which we are apt to consider as evils, are indeed great and solid goods: and that through them, millions of souls shall be brought to eternal happiness, which without them might have been eternally miserable. O let us learn then to resign ourselves, without reserve, to all the appointments of an all-wise and loving Providence!

Consider 3dly, the degrees by which we ought to endeavour to advance towards the perfection of this great virtue of the resignation of ourselves in all things to the divine will. The first and lowest is, to support at least with *patience* the evils that befall us: and this because they come from the hand of God;

and humbly to submit to them, as the just punishment of our sins, saying with the prophet, *I will bear the wrath of the Lord, because I have sinned against him*, (Mich. vii. 9.); and with the Psalmist under afflictions, *I was dumb, and I opened not my mouth, because it is thy doing*, (Ps. xxxviii. 10.)

The second degree, which is much more perfect than the first, is when we not only endeavour to bear our sufferings with patience, so as not to murmur or repine on those occasions, or otherwise offend God, but also are *ready* and *willing to suffer*, because such is the will of God : so that the consideration of God's holy will and pleasure makes the cross (which according to nature we dread and abhor) *agreeable* to us, inasmuch as the will of God is thereby accomplished in us. The third and most perfect degree of resignation, and which carries with it the perfection of divine love and charity, is, when we do not only *readily* and *willingly* accept of the cross from the hand of God, but even rejoice in suffering for the love of him ; and take an unspeakable content in crosses, in adversities, in humiliations, in poverty, in being condemned by the world, &c. so that we would not even wish to be without them, out of the pure love of him, who chose a suffering life for the love of us ; and because the accomplishment of his will is the whole object of our desire, of our love, and of our joy. O what a heaven should we find upon earth, if we could once arrive at this third degree of divine resignation ! For what can disturb that soul, that always rejoices in the accomplishment of the will of God, and finds her pleasure and content in suffering ?

Conclude to make it thy study, to ascend by these steps of resignation to the holy will of God in all things, from virtue to virtue, till thou arrive at the top of the ladder where thou shalt find thy God, and be for ever inseparably united to him.

*On Self-Denial.*

Aug. 18. **C**ONSIDER first, that the capital enemy of the love of God, and of all our good, especially of the resignation and conformity of our will to the will of God, is the vice of *self-love*, or a disorderly inclination to gratify and please ourselves; which is the unhappy consequence of the corruption of man by sin, and the fruitful parent of all our evils. All our vices and passions spring from this poisonous root; all the seven capital sins are but so many branches of this inordinate inclination to ourselves; take away *self-love*, and you shall shut up all the avenues of hell, and establish every where the reign of the love of God, and a most blessed heaven upon earth. Hence the virtue of *self-denial*, the business of which is to suppress and root out this dreadful evil of *self-love*, is one of the most necessary of all Christian virtues, and must ever go hand in hand, with the great virtue of conformity to the will of God; which can never take root in our souls, as long as we are unhappily attached to our own wills, and fond of gratifying our own inclinations. Hence the very first condition the Son of God requires of all that would be his disciples, is to *deny themselves*, Matt. xvi. 24. This *self-denial* is the great lesson he came down from heaven to teach. Happy we, if by his grace we can but effectually learn it in practice!

Consider 2dly, that this virtue of *self-denial* is usually called *mortification*, from a word signifying *slaying*, or *putting to death*: inasmuch as by this continual fighting against ourselves, and against our own corrupt inclinations and passions, we put to death, as it were, and *crucify the old man* of corruption, (Rom. vi. 6.) with his vices and sins, (according to that of the apostle, (Gal. v. 24.) that *they that are of Christ have crucified their flesh, with its vices and concupiscences*) and so die to ourselves; that we may put on the new man Jesus Christ, and live in such a



manner to him, as to be able to say, with the same apostle, *I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me*, Gal. ii. 20. See, my soul, what this virtue of *mortification* means, which is much talked of, and but little understood, and less practised : and yet no virtue is more necessary for our true welfare. We may even apply to it what St. Paul says of *charity*, (1 Cor. xiii.) that *if we speak with the tongues of men and angels—and have the gift of prophecy, and all knowledge, and all faith, so that we could remove mountains, and are not mortified, we are nothing* : and that whatsoever other qualifications we may have, or whatsoever good we may do, as long as our passions and corrupt inclinations remain *unmortified*, we shall still be nothing in the eyes of God.

Consider, 3dly, how this general mortification of our passions and our inordinate inclinations, is every where strongly inculcated in the word of God. We are even assured there, that we must hate ourselves in this life, if we hope to be either true disciples of Christ here, or to be eternally happy with him hereafter. St. Luke xiv. 26. and St. John xii. 25. That *if we live according to the flesh, we shall die ; but if by the spirit we mortify the deeds of the flesh, we shall live*, Rom. viii. 13. And that *they who are in the flesh*, that is, they who are unmortified, *cannot please God*, v. 8. Besides many other texts, which abundantly demonstrate, that no one can be a good Christian, without waging a perpetual war against his own sensual inclinations, and diligently *taking up the cross of daily mortification*. Hence the *flesh*, with its passions and lusts, is always reckoned by divines amongst the three great enemies of the soul : and is indeed, of all the three, by far the most dangerous enemy. Because the *world* and the *devil*, with all their suggestions, would not easily draw us into sin and hell, if our own *flesh*, that is, our corrupt inclinations and passions, did not pave the way, and furnish them with the arms with which they fight against us. The *world* and the *devil* besiege us from

without; but could never force their way into the soul, if our own evil inclinations did not hold correspondence with them, and open the gates of the soul to let them in.

Conclude, if thou desirest to overcome the world and the devil, to make it thy business to subdue the flesh, and to bring it under subjection by wholesome self-denials and mortifications. Without this restraint upon thy passions and inclinations, there will be *no soundness* in thy soul; *the whole head will be sick, and the whole heart sad*, Isai. i. 5, 6.

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*On the Mortification of the Interior.*

Aug. 19. **C**ONSIDER first, that as the business of *mortification* in general is to reform the whole man, and to retrench all that is evil and vicious in us, or that might disqualify us for that union with God, by divine love, for which he made us, and gave us these immortal souls; by tying down our hearts or minds to created objects: so that kind of *mortification* in particular ought to be most diligently exercised by a Christian, that refines, polishes, and reforms our *interior*, in which we ever carry about with us the image of God; and in which he delights to reside, provided he finds it in a proper condition to receive and entertain him; that is, provided he finds it *mortified*. O my soul, what ought we not then to do, to qualify ourselves for so great a happiness as this, of having God with us, and of being interiorly united to him? In order to this, thou must observe well all the irregularities which thy inward powers and faculties are liable to; that thou mayest retrench them by mortification, and so purify thy interior. Believe me, this mortification of the interior is an exercise far more difficult, but withal far more necessary for thee, and far more acceptable to God, than any corporal austerities whatsoever.

Consider 2dly, what those irregularities are, of thy inward powers and faculties, that stand in need of being retrenched by mortification. Alas! if thou

wilt but give thyself the leisure to study well what passes in thy own interior, and to know thyself, thou shalt find thy *understanding* liable to pride, self-conceit, self-sufficiency, presumption, a variety of empty curiosities, and many errors, of dangerous consequence in practice : such errors, I mean, as oppose the maxims of the gospel, and represent things in false lights, and weigh them in false weights, so as to influence the poor soul to prefer the temporal before the eternal. Thou shalt find thy *judgment* liable to be rash and precipitate, and quite clouded with the exhalations that arise from thy passions and self-love. Thou shalt find thy *memory* liable to many vain wanderings and evagations, ever full of empty things, and forgetful of God. Thou shalt find thy *imagination* ever dissipated, in the pursuit of worldly toys, vain schemes, or sinful objects : and all thy *affections*, appetites, and desires, strangely bent upon evil, and averse to every thing that is painful or laborious. See, my soul, what a piece of work is here cut out for thee, and how much thou hast to mortify in thy interior, to qualify it for a union with God !

Consider *sally*, that amongst the powers of the soul, that which most of all stands in need of being mortified is the *will* ; as the will is, or should be, the mistress of the rest, and is obliged to keep them all in order, which she can never do, if she herself be disorderly. Hence the Holy Ghost admonishes us, by the mouth of the wise man, *Ecclus. xviii. 30, 31. Go not after thy own lusts, but turn away from thy own will : if thou give to thy soul her desires, she will make thee a joy to thy enemies.* Hence also he tells us, *Proverbs xxix. 15. The child that is left to his own will bringeth his mother to shame.* Because this will of ours, when indulged, is capable of hurrying us away to all that is evil. And therefore we are called upon in the gospel to *hate our own soul (animam suam)* that is, *our own wills*, in this world, if we hope to be happy in the next. For the fire of

hell, says St. Bernard, *can burn nothing but our own will.*

Conclude to apply thyself seriously to this most necessary mortification of thy interior, and more especially of thy own will and desires. This mortification is to be exercised, first, by denying to thy own will whatever it craves contrary to the will of God: secondly, by accustoming thyself in things indifferent, often to contradict thy own will; and never to do any thing merely to gratify thy own inclinations: thirdly, by curbing, even in things that appear to be good, that eagerness and hurry, which nature, passion, and self love, are apt to prompt thee to; and setting before thy eyes, and quietly following, on these occasions, the will of God, and not thy own.

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*On the Mortification of the Passions.*

Aug. 20. **C**ONSIDER first, the necessity we lie under ever since the corruption of our nature by sin, of keeping our passions also in order, by a continual mortification of them. Before man was corrupted by original sin, his whole soul was regular and orderly, and all his passions were under proper command: but as soon as the superior part of the soul had withdrawn herself from her allegiance to God, the inferior part began to rebel against the superior; and all its appetites and passions were let loose, to run into all manner of disorders; because the bridle of original justice was now flung off with which they were kept in and restrained before. Hence arises an indispensable necessity of our ever mortifying our passions, if we would secure our souls. For as our nature is now corrupted, our love and our hatred, our desires and our fears, our joy and our grief, our anger, &c. all share in this corruption, and are all apt to be disorderly, if not curbed and corrected by daily mortification.

Consider *Edly*, that this most necessary branch of mortification, which relates to our passions, chiefly

consists in the duly regulating all their motions; by directing them, in a proper manner, to their proper objects, and restraining all their excesses: so that they may all be brought under subjection to reason and religion; and made even serviceable to the true welfare of our souls. Thus we are to regulate our *love*, our *desires*, and our *joy*, by turning them away from all disorderly affection to perishable creatures, to the living God: from running after vanity and lying fooleries, to the pursuit of virtue and truth: and by keeping them always within their proper bounds, that they may not disturb the peace of the soul, or distract its application to God. In like manner we must mortify our *fear*, our *anger*, and all our other passions, by watching over all their motions, and restraining all their disorders and excesses. O how happy are they, who, by the daily practice of this mortification, are arrived at that command of their passions, which is the blessed parent of true peace, and a certain image of heaven upon earth. Happy they, who turn their *fear*, and all their *love* to God, and to what God would have them *fear* and *love*: who *hate* nothing but the offence of God: *desire* nothing but the will of God: *rejoice* in nothing but God: *grieve* at nothing but what is contrary to his honour, and the good of souls: and are *angry* at nothing but sin!

Consider 3dly, that as *love* is the strongest of all the passions, and that which principally influences all the rest; so the regulating of our love, and mortifying its disorders, ought to be at all times the great object of the Christian's attention. My love is my weight, says St. Augustin, thither am I carried whithersoever I am carried. Now our love is regular and orderly, when we love all things according to the great rule of the will of God; when we love our friends in God, and our enemies for God's sake; when we weigh all things in the scales of the sanctuary, and prize them according to the weight they have there; and allow them no other love than

what will stand this test. But then on the other hand, whatever love, whether of any person, or any creature, or any thing else, offers to captivate our affections, or to divide, or take off any part of our heart from God; or to carry us any way out of the bounds of moderation, reason, or religion; is disorderly, and must be restrained, corrected, and mortified. All such love as this strikes at the very root of the welfare and salvation of the soul, by violating the very first and chiefest of all God's commandments; which is to love the Lord our God with *all our heart*.

Conclude to watch over all thy passions, that thou mayest keep them all in subjection; but principally to take care to restrain thy love, and thy desires, from all unlawful, dangerous, or vain objects; and from all excess or immoderation, in being too strongly bent, or too eagerly carried, even to lawful ones. For whatsoever the object be, it is a criminal love to affect any thing more than God.

*On the Mortification of the predominant Passion.*

Aug. 21. **C**ONSIDER first, that the passions of love and desire, when they are unmortified, branch out into all manner of vices and vicious inclinations; commonly ranged under the seven heads, which are usually called the seven capital sins: though St. John brings them into a narrower compass, when he reduces them all to these three, *the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life*, 1 John ii. 16. Now amongst these vicious inclinations, which wage war against the soul, there is usually some one or other that is stronger, or more violent than the rest; or that occasions more or greater sins: and this is named by divines *the predominant passion*; the mortification of which is one of the chief businesses of a spiritual life. For this predominant passion being, as it were, the captain and commander of the rest, when this is overthrown, the rest will more easily be subdued, and brought un-

der: as when their champion Goliath was slain, the Philistines were all immediately put to flight.

Consider 2dly, that as this predominant passion, this reigning love, this strongest desire, or affection, or whatever the object of it may be, has already unhappily gained the heart; it is but too apt to impose upon the poor soul with specious pretexts, in order to keep its hold, and to maintain its ground, against the remonstrances of conscience, and all the calls and graces of heaven. It is the Agag, which the deluded soul, by a false compassion, would willingly spare; though with the risk of being cast off by God, as Saul was, for so doing, 1 *Sam.* xv. Ah! Christians, deceive not then yourselves, this predominant passion, this favourite affection which has taken possession of your heart, is indeed the capital enemy of God and your souls; it must be slain; it must be sacrificed to the living God. Beware of the traitor which you carry about with you: suffer him not to impose upon you: it is very easy, if you have not a mind to be wilfully blind, to discover what he would be at; because upon the least examination of your hearts, you shall find him always busy in undermining the reign of the love of God; thrusting himself upon his throne; and setting up an idol in his temple: by challenging the chiefest place in your heart to the prejudice of divine love.

Consider 3dly, what you must do, in order to get rid of this worst of all your enemies. O! you must make yourself thoroughly acquainted with the depth of his malice, and all his stratagems; that you may not be surprised or imposed upon by him: you must observe all his motions, to resist them at the very beginning: you must study all the secret springs by which he acts upon the heart, and sets the other passions on work, to fulfil his irregular inclinations. Ah! Christians, it is of infinite importance in this spiritual warfare, to know the true state of your interior, and to watch all the motions and secret ambushes of your enemies! You must also single out

this enemy, in such manner, as though you are not to allow any one of your passions, or vices, to remain unresisted in your soul, yet you are in a more especial manner to turn all your forces against this predominant passion; by directing your daily and most fervent prayers, your confessions and communions, your particular examination every night, and the rest of your spiritual exercises, towards the total subduing of this evil, and acquiring the contrary virtue.

Conclude, if you hope to succeed in the great work of the mortification of your passions, to begin by declaring an eternal war against their chief; and never ceasing to attack him, upon all occasions, till you have brought him down. All the rest will yield themselves up when he is subdued; and you shall begin to relish the sweets of peace and true liberty, which you shall never enjoy till you have broken the chains with which he enslaves you.

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*On the Mortification of the Sensual Appetite.*

Aug. 22. **C**ONSIDER first, that our *sensual appetite*, that is, the strong inclination we have to gratify our senses, and to indulge them their pleasures, is one of the most dangerous enemies the soul has; and stands most in need of being restrained, and corrected by *mortification*. The flesh, with its senses, was designed to be the servant of the soul; and to be subservient to its true welfare and happiness. But if the sensual appetite be not kept under subjection, by mortification, the servant will quickly become mistress, and the poor soul will be made her slave, and will be dragged along by her irregular inclinations into all kinds of evils. Our sensuality therefore must be mortified: we must absolutely deny ourselves all *unlawful* sensual and carnal pleasures: we must fly them more than death: we must retrench all excess and immoderation in the use even of lawful pleasures and diversions: we must never suffer ourselves to affect them, much less to have a



passion for them: we must accustom ourselves to curb and thwart the inclinations of our senses, in things lawful or indifferent, that so we may acquire a greater facility in overcoming our sensual appetite, when it inclines to things unlawful; and may at the same time punish our having formerly indulged ourselves in them. In fine, we must never do any thing merely for our pleasure.

Consider 2dly, the opposition there is between a sensual life, or a life of pleasure; and a truly Christian life, which is agreeable to the maxims of the gospel, and to the practice of Christ, and of all his Saints, who have taken up their crosses to follow him; and have always borne in their bodies the mortification of Jesus, and have been, as it were, crucified with him. This opposition is so great, that the Apostle cannot speak without weeping of those half Christians, who give themselves up to their pleasures; of whom he says, *Philip. iii. 18, 19, that they are enemies of the cross of Christ; that their end is destruction; that their God is their belly; that they glory in their shame, and mind only earthly things.* Christ did not study his own pleasure: *he did not please himself, Rom. xv. 3.* His whole life was a cross, which he voluntarily chose for the glory of his Father, and for the love of us. The Apostle chastized his body, and brought it into subjection by voluntary mortifications, *1 Cor. ix. 17:* all the Saints have walked in the same footsteps; they have all crucified their own flesh, *Gal. v. 24.* *The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and none but they that use violence upon themselves bear it away, Matt. xi. 12.* And shall Christians think that a sensual life shall ever bring them thither? No: *true wisdom is not found in the land of them that live in delights, Job. xxviii. 13.* And we are not to imagine we may give ourselves up to our pleasures here, and yet promise ourselves *the good things of the Lord in the land of the living hereafter, St. Luke xvi. 25.*

Consider 3dly, that there is no one, but what

may, and ought to practise the mortification of the flesh, and of its sensual appetites; and that too by restraining it often from things otherwise lawful. The guilty must do it to punish themselves for their past sins: the innocent must do it in order to keep themselves from falling into sin; which will be the unavoidable consequence of their not mortifying, and keeping under so dangerous an enemy. None must excuse themselves here on account of their want of strength or health: it is easy for a Christian of good will, to contrive, and to put in execution a variety of self-denials, that neither require any bodily strength, nor prejudice the health. If we are not able to wear the hair shirt, or to use the discipline; if we cannot fast, or lie upon the hard floor; we may at least retrench many superfluities, and affected niceties, in our eating, drinking, and cloathing, &c.: we may shorten the time we give to unnecessary lying in bed; we may, upon many occasions, withdraw ourselves from such things as we are inclined to, and which perhaps are less wholesome for us; and choose such things as are less agreeable to our own inclinations: in fine, we may daily and hourly mortify, in many things, our eyes, our ears, our tongue, &c.

Conclude to make it thy daily business to mortify, on every occasion, thy sensual appetite, lest otherwise *flesh and blood* prevail over thy soul, and she fall an everlasting prey to her mortal enemies.

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*On the Mortification of Curiosity.*

Aug. 23. **C**ONSIDER first, that besides the evil of *sensuality*, which must be mortified, in order to subdue *the concupiscence of the flesh*; there is another dangerous evil that must also be mortified, in order to subdue *the concupiscence of the eyes*; and that is the vice of *curiosity*, which St. Augustin (*Confessions*, l. x. c. 35.) supposes to be understood by this name. A dangerous evil indeed, and the mother of many evils; which makes men

busy themselves about things, either hurtful, or at least nothing at all to their purpose, whilst they neglect things profitable and necessary, yea *the only thing necessary*. Alas! how many things are there that men take much pains to inquire into which are dangerous to their souls? How many which are absolutely useless and unprofitable, and which answer no manner of end, either of the glory of God, or of their own or neighbour's good? And how much loss is here of their precious time! What dissipation of thoughts! What distractions in prayer! What forgetfulness of God and eternity! What an enslaving of the soul to mere toys and vanities! And what account shall they be able to give at the last day of a life spent so unprofitably; so unworthy of the great end for which they came hither; and so perversely, because so contrary to the holy will and law of their Maker! Ah, the dismal consequences of indulging this unhappy curiosity!

Consider 2dly, the particulars in which we must mortify *the lust of the eyes*, if we hope to keep the soul pure; and to prevent death from coming in at those windows. We must *turn our eyes away from vanity*; and much more from all such objects as allure the soul to impure love: an unguarded glance of an eye has a thousand and a thousand times been the death of the soul. Unhappy they who are ever indulging their curiosity in looking after such dangerous objects! And much more unhappy they, who affect, by their light carriage and indecent dress, to draw the eyes and hearts of others to lust! For the same reason, we must mortify also our curiosity with relation to public shows and comedies, as being full of dangers, and of allurements to lust. As also with relation to the reading of all such books as, being either lewd, or profane, or irreligious, tend to debauch the soul, and to draw her into sin. In which number, romances, play books, and such like, are certainly to be comprised: because they only serve to heighten the passions, to soften the soul, and to

dispose her to carnal love; and to shut out from her the spirit of devotion and of the love of God.

Consider 3dly, the necessity of mortifying in like manner the curiosity of the ears: since these also are an avenue, through which, if not well guarded, death oftentimes makes its way into the soul. This branch of curiosity must be corrected, first by stopping the ears to all loose narrations, jests, or songs; all which are apt to convey a mortal poison into the soul: secondly, by restraining them from hearkening to scandal and detraction; with danger of either taking pleasure in it, or countenancing and encouraging so great an evil: thirdly, by keeping a guard upon them, to prevent their taking in a still more dreadful infection, by hearkening to irreligious and impious discourses, which strike at the Deity, and his revealed truths; or tend to the discouraging of virtue, or promoting of vice. In a word, the Christian that would save his soul, must ever have a guard upon himself, in all company and conversation, lest the curiosity of his ears induce him to hearken with pleasure to any such speeches or words, as may let in the corruption of sin into his heart.

Conclude ever to watch and pray against the evil of curiosity, which has so many ways of poisoning the soul. But if thou wouldst indulge the desire of knowledge, (which is so natural to man) let it be by enquiring into useful truths, and such as may serve to bring thee to the sovereign truth. *But woe to them that enquire of men after many curious things, and at the same time are but little curious of knowing the way to serve God.* Kempis.

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*On the Gospel for St. Bartholomew,  
Luke vi. 12, &c.*

Aug. 24. **C**ONSIDER first, how our Lord, designing to make choice of his twelve Apostles, by way of preparation for this great work, went out into a mountain to pray, and there passed the whole night in the prayer of God, that is, in most

earnest and fervent prayer. Learn from hence, my soul, in all thou takest in hand, to begin with prayer, in order to draw down the blessing of heaven upon thy undertakings: learn also of thy Saviour to be fervent and earnest in thy prayers: learn to retire with him, as often as thou canst, for thy private devotion, from the noise and distractions of the world. Recollection, solitude, and the silence of the night, are great helps to devotion. O! what oughtest not thou to do to secure the salvation of thy own soul, when the Son of God has passed even whole nights in prayer for the love of thee? He stood not in need of prayer for himself; but has given us an example, to teach us how much we ought to take to heart, upon all occasions, this exercise of fervent prayer.

Consider 2dly, the fruits of this night's prayer, in the great things our Lord performed the next morning; which we may reduce under three heads. 1. His choice of his twelve Apostles. 2. His divine sermon on the mount. 3. His many miracles he wrought, when, as the gospel informs us, *a very great multitude of people came to hear him, and to be healed of their diseases; and a virtue went out from him, and healed them all*, v. 17, 18, 19. Contemplate, my soul, all these wonders of divine grace, wrought in consequence of the prayer of that night. See a company of poor, weak, illiterate fishermen, wonderfully advanced on a sudden to be the great pillars and founders of the church of God, and prime ministers of his kingdom upon earth. Bow thyself down, and embrace the heavenly law published on this occasion by thy Redeemer, in that admirable sermon, in which, with a most amiable simplicity, joined with a wonderful authority, he has laid down all the fundamentals of Christian morality: and do thou also learn to *approach in spirit to his feet* with his disciples *to receive of his doctrine*, (Deuter. xxxiii. 3.) and to be healed by him of all thy diseases. O! ever remember, that the true way of all

good, and the source of all light, grace, and benediction, is to go up with him to the mountain, and to converse with God by recollection and prayer.

Consider 3dly, what we read here in the gospel: that *all the multitude sought to touch our Lord: for virtue went out from him, and healed all, v. 19.* If virtue went out from our Lord to heal the *corporal* diseases of all them that touched him, whilst he was here visibly present, during his mortal life; can we suppose he has either less power, or less goodness, to heal the *spiritual* maladies of all such as properly apply to him, now he has entered into his glory, after shedding his precious blood for us? No, certainly, but as *all power is given him in heaven and earth;* so *virtue never ceases to go out from him,* in favour of all that spiritually approach to him, and that seek to keep him company in their own interior: and how much more in favour of them that verily and indeed touch him, and receive him within their house, by means of the holy communion. O let us always endeavour to keep close to him, and his virtue will always be with us.

Conclude to go up with Christ, upon all occasions, into the mountain, by retirement and prayer. In all dangers let this be thy refuge. Run hither to be delivered from all thy evils. Here thou shalt meet with thy sovereign good.

## On Humility.

Ang. 25. **C**ONSIDER first, that the most necessary of all mortifications, is that which teaches us to mortify our *pride* by the virtue of *humility*. It is humility is the favourite virtue of heaven: all other virtues are nothing without it: they even degenerate into vices when they are tainted with pride. Humility makes us become *as little ones*; low, mean, and despicable in our own eyes; and willing to be such in the eyes of others. Humility makes us quite sensible of our own nothing, of

our misery, and sinfulness; teaches us to divest ourselves of all conceit of our own performances, or abilities; and to ascribe all good to God alone. Humility sits down in the lowest place; makes us sincerely prefer all others before ourselves; and pretend to no esteem, or praise, or honour, or glory, as due to us, or to any excellence of our own: but to be fully and feelingly convinced, not only that we are good for nothing of ourselves, fit for nothing but to do mischief, and deserve nothing but punishment; but also that it is owing to God's pure goodness that we are suffered to live upon earth; and that any one at all shews us the least regard, or does us the least service; and that all God's creatures have not a general licence to rise up against us, and to punish us in all manner of ways, for our offences against their Creator: in fine, that we are not long since in hell.

Consider 2dly, that what makes this virtue of humility so acceptable to God, is because God is the *Truth*, and cannot help loving the truth. Now all pride is made up of errors and lies; in taking ourselves to be something; in pretending to what is not our due; or ascribing to ourselves what belongs not to us; or, in fine, being puffed up with the gifts of God, as if they were our own property, or of our own growth. And what is all this but *lies*? *Sacrilegious lies*, that offer to rob God of his glory; to challenge to ourselves what belongs to him; and, Satan like, to pretend to set ourselves on his throne! But *Humility* goes always hand in hand with *truth*; and ever grounds herself upon the truth: by giving always to God what belongs to God, and to man what belongs to man: by acknowledging, with all simplicity, conviction, and affection, God to be *all*, and man to be *nothing*: and by ever ascribing to God, whatever there is of good in one's self, or in any thing created; and reserving to one's self nothing but one's own defects. This is true humility: this is the *Truth* that shall stand for ever. This was

found, in the greatest perfection, in the most eminent Saints upon earth: this shall reign with them in heaven, for all eternity; where God shall be *all in all* for ever.

Consider 3dly, that humility is not only a virtue absolutely necessary for arriving at Christian perfection; but that there is even no salvation at all for us without it. There is no going to heaven without God's grace. Now *God resists the proud, and gives his grace to the humble*, St. James iv. 6. And our Lord expressly assures us, that *except we become as little children, by humility, we shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven*, Matt. xviii. 3. No, my soul, let us not deceive ourselves: there is no room in heaven for pride. Satan and his companions were cast down from thence by their *pride*, and their places are not to be filled up but by the *humble*. Only they that *humble themselves* upon earth, shall be *exalted* in heaven. The most high and the most holy, who inhabiteth eternity, will only *dwell with a contrite and humble spirit*; (Isai. lvii. 15) and will have respect to none, to bring them to his heavenly kingdom, but such as in their mortal life, by the virtue of humility, are *poor and little, and of a contrite spirit; and tremble at his words*, Isai. lxvi. 2.

Conclude, if thou wouldst have any part with God in his eternal kingdom, to be ever little and humble here upon earth. The more thou stoopest down, and castest thyself under the feet of all, by humility, the more God will lift thee up and exalt thee: for he alone is truly great and high, and ever looks down, with a favourable eye, upon them that are low and humble, to exalt them here by his grace, and hereafter in his glory. But as for such as lift up their heads by pride, and take themselves to be great and high, he keeps them off at a distance; and regards them with horror. For *the proud and arrogant are an abomination to the Lord*, Prov. xvi. 5.



*On the School of Humility.*

Aug. 26. **C**ONSIDER first, that the school, in which we are to learn true humility, is the serious consideration and true knowledge of God and of ourselves. To know God, and to know ourselves, is the true science of the Saints. These two branches of Christian knowledge usually go hand in hand, and usually promote and assist one another. The more we know our God, and the infinity of all his perfections, the more sensible we are of our own nothing, and of our total dependance on him: and the more we know ourselves, and all our miseries and sins, the more clearly we perceive that God alone is good; and that he is infinitely good, in bearing with us. Here we learn true humility; because here we learn to annihilate ourselves in the sight of that infinite majesty, in whose presence the whole universe dwindles away to a mere nothing; and both heaven and earth quite disappear. Here we learn to ascribe all good to this sovereign good, and nothing of good to ourselves. Here we learn to descend even beneath our nothing, by the consideration of our sins, and of the hell we have deserved by them. Here, in fine, we learn to have so great a sense of our manifold miseries and sins, as to keep our eyes only open to our own defects, and shut to those of others; and by that means we learn to despise no one but ourselves, and to prefer all others before ourselves.

Consider 2dly, O my soul, and in order to acquire a more perfect knowledge of thyself, that so thou mayest always be little and humble, take a more particular review of thy whole self, and seriously reflect on what thou art, both as a mortal and as a sinner. That thy extraction is from nothing; that thou wast conceived and born in sin; that thou art perpetually liable to innumerable miseries, both of soul and body; that all thy powers and faculties are strangely impaired and disordered by sin; that thou art ever prone to evil, and hard to be brought to good; that thy

passions are head-strong and rebellious; thy affections ever bent upon vain toys and lying fooleries; and thy thoughts, words, and actions, full of corruption. In the meanwhile thy time is hastening on without intermission to its last period: death is following close at thy heels, and shall quickly overtake thee; and send away this body of thine, which thou art so fond of, to be the food of maggots and worms; and the poor soul to another world, to be tried there at an unerring tribunal; under a dreadful uncertainty, whether she shall not be delivered up to be an eternal prey to merciless devils. And is it possible that we should be sensible of all these humbling truths, and should seriously reflect on them, and yet be proud!

Consider 3dly, that amongst all these humbling considerations, that which ought most effectually to abate, or rather quite to beat down our pride, is the remembrance of our sins, and of what we have deserved by them. Ah! wretched creature that I am, I have been guilty of mortal sin, of high treason against my God, and that perhaps a thousand times; and consequently have deserved a thousand hells: and what can I have to be proud of? Ah! what a wretched figure did my soul then make in the sight of God and his angels! How odious, how filthy, how abominable was she all that time? And is she not so still? She stood then condemned to hell: and has that sentence ever been reversed? What pretensions then can I have to any honour, esteem, or regard from any one? What title to any favour, from God or man? What just reason to complain, if even all God's creatures should combine against me, to revenge upon me the wrong done to their Creator; and should tread me under their feet, to punish the pride by which I have lifted up my head against the Almighty? What would all this be in comparison with my deserts? How then shall I dare to entertain any proud thought, either of conceit of myself, or of seeking to be esteemed by others, or of resenting

any affront, contradiction, or contempt from any man: since I have no title to any thing else but hell? And what room can there be for glorying there?

Conclude daily to frequent this school of humility, by studying well to know thy God, and to know thyself: this kind of science is infinitely more to thy purpose, than all other arts and sciences put together: all which indeed would only serve to puff thee up, and to betray thee to thy mortal enemies, the world, the flesh, and the devil, if not accompanied with the knowledge of God and of thyself.

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*On the Master of whom we are to learn Humility.*

Aug. 27. **C**ONSIDER first, that in order to teach us humility, God has sent us down a master from heaven, even his own eternal Son, who is no less God than his Father. Of what importance then must it be for us, my soul, to study well this great lesson, which the Son of God himself has come down from heaven to teach! O who could have thought, that we, who are of ourselves so very little, so very wretched and contemptible, so near the brink of nothing; and, by our sins, beneath nothing; should be so strangely conceited of ourselves, and so monstrously corrupted with pride and self-love, that nothing less should suffice to teach us to be little and humble, than the great example of the Son of God himself, coming down from heaven, and becoming a little one amongst us; yea as *a worm and no man, the reproach of men and the outcast of the people*, Ps. xxi. And yet even so, how few are there of us, that are content to be little and contemptible with him! How few are willing to be scholars of this heavenly master; or even to submit to the least humiliations, for the love of him!

Consider 2dly, the sweet invitation of our Lord, (St. Matt. xi. 28, 29) calling us all to *come to him, and to take up his yoke upon us, and to learn of him, because he is meek and humble of heart*; and promising

us refreshment, and rest for our souls, upon our compliance with his invitation. O what encouragements are here, my soul, to engage us to spare no pains in learning in this heavenly school of humility, opened by the Son of God, and to make us quite in love with this study of truth! A most excellent master; the Son of God himself, the sovereign truth! Blessed schoolfellows! all the saints of God, and favourites of heaven! A most excellent science, which brings the soul through the gate of her own nothing, to the contemplation of her God, the pure truth! Excellent fruits! the peace of the soul, refreshment and rest from her labours and burdens, a victory over all her passions, and a happy acquisition of all other virtues! O let us frequent this heavenly school of Christ.

Consider 3dly, the great example of humility given us by the Son of God, *who being in the form of God, (true God, no less than his Father) and therefore thought it no robbery to be equal with God, yet debased himself, taking the form of a servant, viz. the servile nature of man, and humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death, even the most disgraceful death of the cross, Philip. ii. 6, 7, 8.* His whole life was full of lessons of humility. He chose to be born in a stable; to be circumcised as a sinner; to flee into Egypt, as if he were unable to resist a petty mortal; to be brought up in poverty and labour; to work at a mean mechanic trade; to be obedient to his creatures; to be baptized amongst sinners; to suffer himself to be tempted by the devil; to make choice of the poorer and meaner sort of men for his companions and disciples; to make himself as their servant, even to the washing of their feet; to fly from honours and applause; to conceal his glory; to enjoin secrecy with regard to his wonderful works; and to embrace on all occasions, both in life and death, whatsoever was most humbling and most despicable in the eyes of men. O, divine Jesus, teach us to follow thy blessed example! O teach us to be meek and humble of

heart, like thee; that so we may be thy disciples indeed!

Conclude to set always before your eyes the life and doctrine of Jesus Christ; in order to conform yourselves to his divine maxims and examples; and to learn of him to be truly humble. No other master but he can effectually teach you this divine lesson.

*On the Fruits of Humility.*

Aug. 28. **C**ONSIDER first, that *humility* is the ground on which other virtues must be built; they have all of them a necessary dependance on this foundation; and are all of them more or less perfect, in proportion to the degree in which we possess humility. *Faith* itself, which is commonly looked upon as the foundation of all our good, absolutely depends upon *humility*: even that humility, which obliges the soul to adore what she cannot understand; to submit to the most humbling truths; and to *cast down every height that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and to bring into captivity every understanding to the obedience of Christ*, 2 Cor. x. 4, 5. Because as all heresies proceed from pride, self-conceit, and refusing to give up, or submit one's own judgment to divine authority; so nothing else but humility can secure the soul from this danger, and keep her firm to her faith. In like manner *divine hope* depends also upon humility, which alone can keep the soul in the golden mean, between the two extremes of diffidence and presumption: whilst it teaches her to have no opinion, or confidence in herself, nor any ways to build on her own sandy bottom; but wholly upon the rock, which can never fail us, of the power, goodness; and mercy of God. For the less we trust in ourselves, the more we trust in God. And thus we shall always find, that they that are the most humble, have also the strongest faith, and hope, and are usually instruments in the hand of God of his greatest works.

Consider 2dly, that *divine charity*, the queen of all virtues, as to both her branches, viz. both the love of God, and the love of our neighbours, has also a close connexion with humility, and can never maintain her ground in our souls, without being supported by humility: because humility furnishes the soul with the most pressing motives to assist her to love her God: humility sets his goodness in its proper light; makes the soul admire that he being what he is should have any regard to her, or even bear with such a sinful wretch as she is: humility teaches her that she is nothing, and that God is the great *All*; infinitely good in himself, and infinitely good to her: and indeed this infinite goodness of God, which is the proper object of divine love, is never rightly apprehended, but by the humble. And as to that other branch of charity that relates to our neighbours, it is very evident it can never be maintained but by humility: for all the vices that oppose and destroy fraternal charity, such as hatred, envy, contention, rash judgment, detraction, anger, &c. all spring from pride, and are not to be vanquished but by true humility; which teaches us to prefer all others before ourselves, and to be angry with no one but ourselves.

Consider 3dly, that *prayer*, which is the general means of all our good, must also be presented before the throne of God, and recommended by humility; or else it will never be effectual with God: but when it is accompanied with humility, it can do all things. *The prayer of him that humbleth himself*, saith the wise man, (*Eccles. xxxv. 21.*) *shall pierce the clouds; and he will not depart till the Most High behold him*, viz. with a favourable eye, to grant his petition. For, as the Psalmist assures us, (*Ps. ci. 18.*) *God hath regard to the prayer of the humble, and despiseth not their petitions.* And from the beginning the proud have never been acceptable to him: but the prayer of the humble, and of the meek, hath always pleased him, *Judith ix. 16.* Even the prayer of the greatest sin-

ners, when it is presented with a *contrite and humbled heart*, is not despised by him, *Ps. l.* As evidently appears in the case of the publican, (*Luke xviii.*) who by this one short prayer, *O God be merciful to me a sinner*, accompanied with a profound humility, and a perfect contrition, was immediately *justified*. O, blessed humility, what canst thou not effect! O dear Lord, teach us to be humble!

Conclude, if thou desirest to raise in thy soul the fabric of virtue, to lay in the first place the foundation of humility; and the higher thou hopest to erect this fabric, the lower must thou sink the foundation, by a more profound humility. Virtue without this foundation will prove no better than a house built upon sand, which at the first storm or inundation will fall to ruin.

*On other Fruits of Humility.*

Aug. 29. **C**ONSIDER first, that the moral virtues, as well as the theological, have all of them a necessary dependance on humility. That *prudence* will come to nothing which is self-conceited, and builds upon the devices of man, rather than upon the light and grace of God, procured by *humble prayer*. *Justice* will be deficient in many of its branches, if corrupted by pride; which always makes men partial to themselves, and so full of themselves, as to be ever ready to judge, censure, despise and condemn their neighbours; and unwilling to regulate their thoughts, words, and deeds, by that golden rule of doing in all things as they would be done by. That *fortitude* will fail, when it comes to the trial, which for want of humility is built upon sand, and not upon the rock. And that *temperance* can never be perfect, which only withholds the sensual appetite from excess, and does not withal restrain the irregularities of the other passions, and qualify the fumes of pride, that they may not turn the head

with self-conceit: now this is the proper business of humility, and can never be effected without humility.

Consider 2dly, that not only the four *cardinal* virtues, but all the others depend in like manner on the foundation of humility. *Meekness*, which restrains anger, and bears, with equality of soul, all affronts and provocations, goes always hand in hand with *humility*, and is recommended to us jointly with humility, by the great example of our Lord: learn of me, saith he, for *I am meek and humble of heart*. *Poverty of spirit* (which disengages the soul from the love of the world) is either *humility* itself, or the offspring of *humility*. *Purity*, and *chastity* can never be maintained but by *humility*: the most shameful falls into the worst of impurities are often the punishment of pride, *Rom. i. 24*. *Modesty*, when it only regulates the exterior, and is not accompanied with *humility* of heart, is but hypocritical and Pharisical; and deserves not the name of virtue. *Obedience* is the favourite daughter of *humility*, as *disobedience* is the first-born of *pride*. *Patience* under crosses and sufferings springs also from *humility*, which teaches us to *humble* ourselves under the mighty hand of God, in all his appointments; ever to kiss the rod, and to be convinced that what we suffer is nothing to what we deserve. In a word, a perpetual *conformity* with the blessed will of God in all things is ever the inseparable companion of true *humility*; and brings along with it to the soul the happy fruits of *tranquillity* and *peace*; which are the joint offspring of these two virtues.

Consider 3dly, that *humility* is also the parent of these two necessary virtues of *penitence* and *self-denial*. Because the more *humble* we are, the more we know ourselves, and the greater sense we have of our sins; and consequently the greater horror and hatred for them, and the greater desire of punishing them by *penance*, and of making satisfaction for them by a *penitential* life. And in like manner the



more humble we are, the more we are also sensible of our own weakness, and of all the dangers that surround us on all sides, from the devil and the world, and most of all from our own passions, and that unhappy self-love, which is the root of all our evils: and thus the humble knowledge of ourselves puts us upon keeping a greater guard upon ourselves, and a closer hand upon our passions and disorderly inclinations, in order to restrain all their irregularities, and bring them all under perfect subjection. Now this is *self-denial*; the business of which is to subdue *self-love*, and to force it to submit to the love of God. Thus all virtues depend upon humility. O lovely humility! O how blessed it is to be thus little in our own eyes! There is no other way to any degree of true greatness.

Conclude, if thou aspirest at perfection, to enter upon the path of humility; no other way can bring thee thither: if thou aim at arriving thither by any other road, thou wilt be sure to fall down some dreadful precipice.

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#### *On the Degrees of Humility.*

Aug. 30. **C**ONSIDER first, that true humility does not consist in speaking ill of ourselves, by saying we are great sinners, or the like; nor yet in wearing plain apparel, or employing ourselves in mean offices; nor in looking down upon the ground, &c. we may do all this, and yet be far from being humble; because all this may be done out of pride, either to acquire the esteem of others by this outward shew of humility, or to please and applaud ourselves with the conceit of our being humble: true humility consists not in words, nor in the outside; but in the inward sentiments of the heart. Humility, says St. Bernard, is a *virtue by which a man, out of a most true knowledge of himself, becomes mean and contemptible in his own eyes: so that for a man to be truly humble, is to have a low opinion of himself, through the deep sense he has of his own nothing*

and his sins; and therefore to despise himself, and to be willing to be despised by all the world. See, my soul, if these be thy dispositions: if not, thou art not truly humble.

Consider 2dly, that the first degree of true humility, is that which is expressed in the definition given by St. Bernard, *viz.* that we should have that knowledge of ourselves, and of all our miseries and sins; such a conviction of our having nothing at all to be proud of, and very many things that make us wretchedly mean and contemptible, as sincerely to despise ourselves; seeing there is nothing in us of good that is our own, and that whatsoever is in us of our own proper growth, or of our own stock, is all good for nothing, yea filthy and abominable. What room then can there be in us for any self-conceit, or self-esteem? How many, and how pressing inducements have we; to oblige us to think meanly of ourselves, and to despise ourselves? And yet how much does this unhappy pride prevail, in spite of all these humiliations which we carry about with us. Oh! let this misery of ours at least be a motive to despise ourselves the more.

Consider 3dly, that the second degree of true humility advances us still farther, and makes us not only to despise ourselves, but to be willing, and even desirous, to be despised by all others: and that all others should have the same mean opinion of us as we pretend to have of ourselves. And, indeed, since in all other things we are ever willing to have others to be of the same opinion with ourselves, did we sincerely despise ourselves we should certainly be glad that all others should have the same way of thinking as we have, and should in like manner despise us also. Alas! how far am I from these dispositions! The third, and most sublime degree of humility, is that of the Saints, who in the midst of the greatest favours, and highest elevations, and all the supernatural gifts of divine grace, are so established in God's truth, as to ascribe nothing at all to them-

selves, but all to God : and by how much the more they are exalted by him, are so much the more mean in their own eyes, by descending so much the deeper into the abyss of their own nothing. Happy they that in all things know how to distinguish what belongs to God, from that which belongs to themselves, and to reserve to themselves only that which is their own ; and to give all the rest to God !

Conclude to aim at ascending from step to step, by the help of the knowledge of thyself ; and not to rest till thou arrivest at the perfection of humility. She will bring to thee all good things along with her ; and conduct thee safe to the kingdom of God.

*On the Practice of Humility.*

Aug. 31. **C**ONSIDER first, that in order to acquire this most necessary virtue of humility, we must have a great esteem for it ; we must greatly desire it, and seek after it ; we must earnestly pray for it every day of our lives, and must neglect no opportunity of learning it, or of improving ourselves in it, by the practice of it ; that is, by daily exercising ourselves in the acts of it. Now as the *humiliations*, which come to us, either from the hand of God, or man, give us the best opportunity of practising or exercising humility, we must learn to welcome these humiliations, and to embrace them in such a manner, as to take occasion from them to humble ourselves daily both to God and man. For as we shall never learn patience without sufferings and crosses ; so we shall never learn humility without *humiliations*. But as in the sufferings and crosses which come to us through the hands of wicked men, we must ever distinguish that which is the work and will of God, from that which is of the malice of man ; so that we embrace the one, whilst we detest the other : so likewise in our humiliations, if they be attended with the evil of sin, either of our own, or of others, we must in such manner humble

ourselves under them, as to embrace the abjection or humiliation, whilst we abhor the sin.

Consider 2dly, that in learning humility by practice, it will be proper to proceed gradually, by setting ourselves certain lessons, beginning with those that are more easy, and when these are learnt, proceeding to such as are more difficult. Thus, for instance, let us begin learning, 1. Not to seek, in any thing that we do, the praise, esteem, or applause of man; nor to say any word tending, directly or indirectly, to our own praise or honour; but rather to mortify that inclination we have to be ever speaking of ourselves, and of our own performances. 2. Never to excuse or palliate our own faults or defects, nor to fling the blame upon others. 3. Not to take pleasure in hearing ourselves praised, nor in our being honoured or applauded by men: nor to be displeas'd at others being extolled, or preferred before us. 4. Carefully to shun all occasions of honour and praise, as far as we can, without being wanting to the duties of our calling. See, my soul, how much work is here cut out for thee, and yet these are but the beginnings of the virtue of humility.

Consider 3dly, that to proceed in the practice of humility, we must not content ourselves with the not seeking, nor affecting, nor taking any complacency in the praise, honour, or esteem of others; but rather shunning and flying from it; but moreover we must put off all *self-esteem*, and learn to despise ourselves from our hearts, and not to leave off till, according to the gospel lesson, we can, with all simplicity and sincerity, *sit down in the lowest place*; by giving the preference, in our own esteem, to all others before ourselves, and thinking ourselves the worst of all. Then as to the sentiments of others in our regard, and their treatment of us, we are to proceed in the study and practice of humility by these three steps: 1. We are to learn to suffer with meekness and patience our being despis'd, reproach'd, or affronted by others. 2. We are to

learn to receive this kind of treatment with a willingness and readiness of mind, and to be pleased with our being slighted and contemned. 3. We must even learn to embrace all these kinds of humiliations with joy : and not to stop, till with the apostle, we not only are dead to the world, and to all it can say, either for us, or against us ; but are even glad, that we should be crucified to the world, and the world to us.

Conclude to continue, by a diligent application, both the study and practice of these great lessons, till thou become perfect in them all ; and go through the whole course of this heavenly science, the science of the saints.

*On the eight Beatitudes. St. Matt. v.*

Sept. 1. **C**ONSIDER first, how the Son of God; the eternal Wisdom of the Father, being come down from heaven, to be our father, our light, and our guide, in order to reclaim us from all our errors, to dispel our darkness, to redress all our evils, and to conduct us into the way of true and everlasting happiness : opened his heavenly school for these purposes, by his divine sermon upon the mount ; in the beginning of which he has laid down, in a few words, the principal maxims of true wisdom, and all the fundamentals of Christian morality, comprised in what we commonly call the *eight beatitudes*. Christians, we all desire to be happy for ever : and behold here the wisdom of God, which can neither deceive nor be deceived, declares to us in clear and distinct terms, what it is that is to make us happy here, and to conduct us safe to a happiness that shall never end. O let us embrace then these blessed lessons ! Who would not study them well, since the learning of them is to make us wise indeed, and to bring us infallibly to the very source of all wisdom and happiness ; even to an eternal union with God himself ? O heavenly Master, who would not frequent thy divine school, since in

the very first entrance into it, thou thus directest us into a plain and easy way to eternal bliss?

Consider 2dly, that the ancient philosophers, with all their pretensions to wisdom, were strangely in the dark with regard to man's true happiness, his last end, and his sovereign good; about which they ran into many errors; and not one of them all ever came near the truth. And as they knew not the end, so were they also strangers to the true means that were to bring us to this end. They never once imagined that, to be *poor in spirit*, to be *meek*, to *mourn*, to *suffer persecution*, &c. was the way to happiness: much less did they suspect that such as these alone were actually happy. This was a doctrine never heard of in their schools. This was a lesson that was to be taught by the Son of God. This truth he brought down with him from heaven, and delivered to his disciples in his first divine sermon. O my soul, let us embrace, with all our affections, these divine truths, taught us by so great a master; let us be practically convinced of them, and conform ourselves to them in the whole conduct of our lives.

Consider 3dly, how miserable are all the children of Babylon; that is, all poor deluded worldlings, who under the name of Christians, whilst they profess themselves followers and disciples of this divine master, take no notice of these lessons which he came from heaven to teach, but live on in an affected ignorance of them, so as to apprehend all those to be miserable, whom he pronounces *blessed*, and those alone to be happy, who wallow in riches and sensual pleasures; whom he declares to be miserable, and against whom he pronounces his *woe*. And do such people as these believe the gospel indeed? whilst they pretend to seek for happiness in the very way which (if the gospel be true) must needs betray them into many errors, labours, and sorrows here, and shortly conduct them into endless misery. O let us at least be more wise! Let us open our eyes to this great light, which is come down

from heaven, to shine upon them that before sat in darkness, and in the shadow of death. Let us believe and adhere to this great teacher, who *has the words of eternal life*. Let us follow him, and we shall not fail, under his conduct, to find the true way of solid happiness, and eternal life.

Conclude to be ever thankful to the Son of God, for all these great gospel truths, which he has brought us down from heaven; in order to set loose our souls from the earth, and so to carry us up to heaven. O! if we desire to fly up to this happy region of pure and immortal joys, it must be with the wings of these virtues, that are recommended to us in these eight beatitudes.

#### *On Poverty of Spirit.*

Sept. 2. **C**ONSIDER first, that the first of the eight beatitudes is expressed in these words: *Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven*, Matt. v. 2. This beatitude, or happiness, which brings with it a title to the kingdom of heaven, belongs, in the first place, to them that are *poor by condition*, and in effect, (*Luke vi. 20.*) provided they be contented with their poverty, and cordially embrace it, as the beloved companion and favourite of Christ and his saints. The Son of God came down from heaven to seek poverty upon earth: he was born in poverty; he lived in poverty; and he died in poverty: and shall we, my soul, disdain, shall we fly and abhor, what the wisdom of God made choice of for him and his? Especially since he has declared, that to be poor here is the true way to be rich hereafter; and that the men of riches, *who have their consolation here*, after they have slept out their short sleep, shall find their hands empty: whilst the poor, after their short sufferings, shall be admitted to the immense treasures of a happy eternity.

Consider 2dly, that this beatitude belongs in the second place to them that are *poor in affection*; that

is, who set not their heart on their worldly wealth, but are in readiness of mind to part with their riches, whenever God shall call for all, or any part of them; and in effect, willingly resign them up, when he by any occasion is pleased to take them away. As also to all such as are poor by choice, for the love of Christ; who, when they understand such to be the will of God, actually relinquish all they have to follow him. In fine, to all such as have their affections disengaged from all perishable things; from all worldly honours, possessions, and pleasures; from all that is earthly and temporal: in a word, from all that is not God: for such as these, and only such as these, are in a proper disposition to fly up to the kingdom of heaven. There is no flying thither, as long as we are tied down by affection to any thing upon earth. *O who will give me the wings of the dove*, that is, of simplicity, and purity in all my intentions and affections, that being let loose from this wretched earth, by this true poverty of spirit, I may fly up freely to my God, and eternally repose in him!

Consider sadly, that this beatitude belongs in a particular manner to the *humble*: for such as they are truly *poor in spirit*; for as much as they have not their *spirit* puffed up with windy *pride*, nor with any conceit of any ability of their own; like him to whom it is said, *Apoc. iii. 17. Thou sayest: I am rich and made wealthy, and I have need of nothing: and thou knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked*: nor are they *high spirited* or *high minded*, which is being *rich in spirit*: but are poor, mean, little in their own eyes; and therefore exalted by God; who to such little ones as these gives his grace in this world, and his heavenly kingdom in the next. O teach us, dear Lord, to be thus poor in spirit: teach us to be little and humble.

Conclude to begin thy study of true wisdom, by applying thyself to learn well this first lesson of po-



erty of spirit : especially since thy great master expects and requires of all his disciples, that they should enter into his school with a disengagement of their heart and affection at least from every thing else : that they should leave all to follow him.

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*On Meekness.*

Sept. 9. **C**ONSIDER first, that after *poverty of spirit*, in the next place *meekness* is recommended to us, as the true road to everlasting happiness. *Blessed are the meek, for they shall possess the land.* These two virtues of *poverty of spirit*, and *meekness*, are nearly allied to each other, they go hand in hand. Our Lord joins them both together, and expects we should learn them both from him, (*Matt. xi.*) when he calls upon us all, *to take up his yoke upon us, and to learn of him, because he is meek and humble of heart.* But what will he give us, do you think, if we learn to imitate his meekness ? O ! he assures us that we shall find, in the exercise of this virtue, *refreshment, rest, and peace* for our souls here ; and shall inherit the *land* of the living hereafter. Happy portion of meek souls, even the possession of the Lord of Life himself, in *the land of the living !* Christians, who would not embrace this lovely virtue, which brings with it a calm serenity and tranquillity of soul, even during our pilgrimage through this region of the dying, and secures to us, in our true country, the eternal repose and life of the saints !

Consider 2dly, what this *meekness* is, which is entitled to this beatitude. *Meekness* is a virtue, which restrains all anger and passion ; which suppresses the swelling of the heart, under real or imaginary provocations or injuries ; which stills the tumults of the soul on all these occasions ; keeps in all heat, or violence of words ; and allows no thoughts to the soul of any other than that truly Christian revenge, of *overcoming evil with good.* Such was the practice

of the Lamb of God, both in life and death; of whom it was written, (*Isai. xlii. and Matt. xii.*) *He shall not contend nor cry out, neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets: the bruised reed he shall not break, and smoking flax he shall not extinguish, &c. He shall not be sad nor troublesome, &c.* And *1 Pet. ii. 23.* *When he was reviled, he did not revile, when he suffered, he threatened not; but delivered himself to him that judged him unjustly.* Now it is this meekness, this sweet, mild, gentle behaviour, this evenness of soul, joined with courtesy in words, and affability, to the little, and to the poor, as much as to the great, and to the rich, when joined with true humility of heart, makes up the proper and distinctive livery of the true servants and followers of Jesus Christ; which if we do not all endeavour to put on, he will not own us for his. It was this made up the amiable character of the primitive Christians. The sweet odour of these truly Christian virtues attracted thousands in those days to the faith of Jesus Christ, and will be found at all times more effectual in order to the conversion of souls, than the strongest arguments, or even miracles, if not recommended by meekness and humility. O let us embrace these lovely virtues! *My son, says the Spirit of God, do thy works in meekness: and thou shalt be beloved above the glory of men, Eccus. iii. 19.*

Consider 3dly, what we must do, that we may effectually learn to be meek, and may obtain a complete victory over anger and passion, and all that train of evils, which are the usual attendants or consequences of anger and passion. First, We must *watch*. 2dly, We must *pray*. 3dly, We must *fight*. We must *watch* over our own hearts; that we may not be surprised by the sudden motions of anger, and hurried away before we are aware: we must forecast the occasions, in which we may meet with temptations or provocations, that we may be prepared for them, and armed against them. We must, upon all occasions, *pray*, with all the fervour of our souls, for

the divine assistance, against so dangerous an evil as passion, as being a capital enemy of charity, the queen of virtues : we must often lament our misery in this kind, at the feet of the Lamb of God ; and sue for redress by the intercession of the blessed Virgin, and of all the saints : we must for this purpose frequent the sacraments, the sources of heavenly grace. We must *fight*, by diligently suppressing the first motions of wrath : we must be convinced that no man upon earth, nor all the men upon earth, no nor all the devils in hell, with all their malice, can do us half so much harm as we do ourselves by venting our passion, and seeking revenge : and therefore we must resolve to *fight* till death, with the best arms we are able, against this wicked passion, as an enemy, which is continually seeking to betray our souls to Satan.

Conclude to spare no pains, that thou mayest effectually learn of Jesus Christ to be meek and humble of heart : there is no other way to peace here, nor to heaven hereafter.

### On Mourning.

Sept. 4. **C**ONSIDER first, those words of our Lord in the third beatitude, *Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.* And reflect, how widely distant are all the maxims and notions of worldlings, with relation to a happy life, from the doctrine of this beatitude ; which yet is the doctrine of Truth. The children of this world imagine that mirth, and jollity, and pastimes, and worldly pleasures, are the chief ingredients of a happy life ; and that such as laugh now, are much more happy than such as weep and mourn. But they are certainly deceived : for he that cannot err, has pronounced a *woe* (implying the worst of miseries) against *them that laugh now, for they shall mourn,* saith he, *and weep,* (Luke vi. 25.) whilst on the other hand he has declared them happy, that now *weep and mourn.* And his holy Spirit long before has

told us, by the wisest of men, (*Eccl. ii. 2.*) *Laughter I have counted error, and to mirth I have said, why art thou vainly deceived?* And again, (*Eccl. vii. 5.*) *The heart of the wise is where there is mourning, and the heart of fools where there is mirth.* O let us then mourn now with the wise and with the saints, that we may rejoice with them for ever.

Consider 2dly, what kind of *mourning* is here recommended in this beatitude. Not worldly sadness, of which it is written, (*Eccl. xxx. 25*) *Sadness hath killed many, and there is no profit in it* : and (*2 Cor. vii. 10.*) *The sorrow of the world worketh death.* Not a sullen melancholy, or any such mourning as is turbulent, or accompanied with impatient wishes for death, or anxious solitudes, or despondency : but a more calm and peaceful *mourning*, viz. of *compunction* for our sins, daily bewailing them in the sight of God, and doing penance for them ; of *compassion* for our neighbours, lamenting their miseries, and the dismal havock that sin is continually making amongst souls ; of *condolence* with Jesus Christ, for the outrages he daily receives from impenitent sinners, who are continually crucifying him by their wicked lives : in fine of *devotion*, in consideration of our long and wretched banishment, our great distance from our true country, in the midst of wars and dangers, and no security, but in continual watching, praying, and labouring to work out our salvation with fear and trembling ; of our absence from God, our sovereign good, who alone can satisfy our souls ; and therefore daily mourning for the length of our sojourning in this Babylon, with longing desires after our heavenly Sion. Happy they that are always mourning in this manner !

Consider 3dly, what the reward is, that is here promised to them that *mourn* : *They shall be comforted*, saith the Lord. Yea, they shall be *comforted*, even in this life, with the sweet visitations and graces of the Spirit of God, the true *comforter* of souls ; with the satisfaction and peace of a good conscience ;

and with the experience of the inconceivable sweetness that is found in the love of God; one hour of which is capable of affording more solid pleasure and delight to the soul, than many years of worldly enjoyment. And in the life to come, they shall be comforted without measure or end; where they shall be eternally inebriated with the plenty of God's house, and shall be made to drink of the torrent of his pleasure, at the very head of the fountain of life, (Ps. xxxv. 9, 10.) the streams of which afford immortal joys to the whole city of God above. O when shall we, my soul, be so happy as to drink at this fountain!

Conclude to make it thy choice to *mourn now*, that thou mayest rejoice for ever. Remember that *they that sow in tears shall reap in joy*, Ps. cxxv. 5. As on the other side the children of the Babylon of this world, who seek their delight and comfort here, must expect hereafter to fall under that sentence of Babylon, pronounced *Apoc. xviii. 7. As much as she hath glorified herself, and hath been in delicacies, so much torment and sorrow give ye to her.*

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*On hungering and thirsting after Justice.*

Sept 5. **C**ONSIDER first, the words of the fourth beatitude: *Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice: for they shall have their fill.* O happy hunger and thirst, which brings the soul to the possession of all true justice, virtue, and perfection, and to a blessed union with the very fountain of justice, which is God himself! Reflect, my soul, how the desire to be good is indeed the beginning of all good: the desire of wisdom, according to the scripture, is the beginning of wisdom: the desire of the love of God, is the beginning of the love of God: and so of all other virtues. But then this desire must not be a half desire, like that of the sluggard, of whom the wise man says, *that he willeth and he willeth not*, (Prov. xiii. 4.) but a full and earnest desire. And when this desire is strong

and perseverant, when it grows to be a vehement *hunger* and *thirst* after divine love, and after all true justice and Christian perfection, it then sets the soul upon seeking diligently, praying heartily, knocking earnestly at the gate of the divine mercy, and employing all possible means to procure the satisfying of this hunger and thirst: and thus it easily overcomes all obstacles, and never leaves off its pursuit, till it has obtained what it so earnestly seeks and desires. O happy souls, that hunger and thirst in this manner!

Consider 2dly, more in particular, what it is we are to *hunger and thirst after*, in order to be entitled to this beatitude. The justice of God in ourselves: the justice of God in our neighbours: the justice of God in himself. We *hunger and thirst after the justice* of God in ourselves, when we earnestly seek and desire that we ourselves may, by the grace of God, *fulfil all justice*; that we may acquit ourselves of every branch of our duty; and that the love of God may take full possession of our souls, both for time and eternity. We *hunger and thirst after the justice* of God in our neighbours, when we earnestly desire, and, as much as lies in us, seek and procure, that all others may know, love, and serve God, and be eternally his. We *hunger and thirst after the justice* of God, in himself, when we are in love with his own infinite goodness, as it is in itself, with the beauty of his divine attributes; with his *greater glory* in all things, and with the perfect accomplishment of his holy will. Such was the *hunger and thirst after justice*, that our Lord himself had here upon earth, who says of himself, (St. John iv. 34.) *My meat is to do the will of him that sent me.* My soul, have we any share in this *blessed hunger and thirst*? Or do we not rather loathe this heavenly food, and only hunger after the flesh-pots of Egypt, and thirst for muddy waters, drawn out of broken cisterns, which can never satisfy us?

Consider 3dly, the reward here promised to them

that *hunger and thirst after justice*: they shall have their fill, saith the Lord: their fill here, of divine grace, of true devotion, of heavenly charity, of all Christian virtues, of a store of good works and merit, of all the gifts and the fruits of the Holy Ghost; in a word, of that *justice*, which they *hunger and thirst after*: and hereafter they shall be still more happily filled with the beatific vision, and the eternal enjoyment of God himself, the only true and sovereign Good, which alone can satisfy the heart of man; according to that of the Psalmist, (Ps. xvi. 15.) *I shall be satisfied, when thy glory shall appear.* Here they shall be filled with the grace of God, raining down upon them from the great ocean above; hereafter they shall be drowned in that immense ocean of the Deity, where they shall be brimfull of God for all eternity.

Conclude to direct thy appetite towards *the good things of the Lord, in the land of the living*; and in the mean time towards *the fulfilling of all his justice.* But O! take care it be not depraved with the false sweets of worldly, sensual, and carnal pleasures! These will take away from thee all relish for the things of God: they will neither fill thee, or satisfy thee themselves, nor suffer thee to *taste*, either in time, or eternity, *how sweet is the Lord.*

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*On being merciful.*

Sept. 6. **C**ONSIDER first, the words of the fifth beatitude: *Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy*: and reflect on the necessity we continually lie under of the mercy of God, and how easy a means our Lord has here furnished us with for obtaining this mercy. All our good must come from God: and as we have rendered ourselves absolutely unworthy of any good at all by our sins, we can alledge nothing for ourselves, but can only appeal to the divine mercy, that he may give us the grace we have not deserved, and forgive us the punishments we have deserved, and the sins by which

we have deserved them. So that the finding mercy with God is all in all; and the means of finding this mercy, is to shew mercy to one another. *Forgive, and you shall be forgiven. Give, and it shall be given to you, Luke vi. 37, 38.* O how lovely, how beautiful, how beneficial both for time and eternity, is this virtue of mercy! How sweet are all her fruits! She is the favourite of heaven, and makes all her lovers favourites of heaven: she is the eldest daughter of the great King (whose mercy distinguishes itself, and shines most brightly over all his works): she shews herself to all them that seek her, she runs to the embraces of all them that are in love with her; she carries them home with her to her Father's house: even to the sacred mansions of a happy eternity.

Consider 2dly, the diverse ways of shewing mercy that are recommended to us by the word of God. Such are, 1st, *All the works of mercy corporal*; by feeding and cloathing any of the poor members of Jesus Christ; by visiting and relieving the sick or imprisoned, &c. Such works as these, according to the scripture, (*Job. xii. 9.*) *deliver from death, they purge away sins, and make us find mercy and life everlasting.* Such works as these entitle us to an eternal kingdom, *Matt. xxv. 34, 35.* 2dly, *The works of mercy spiritual*, by assisting or relieving our neighbours in their spiritual necessities; by giving them good counsel, or instruction; by comforting them under their afflictions; by encouraging them in temptations; but especially by reclaiming them from their errors and vices, and by that means delivering their souls from the second and everlasting death, and putting them in the right way of coming to live for ever with the ever living God. O how acceptable to God; how precious in his sight are these spiritual works of mercy! The Son of God came down from heaven to exercise these kinds of works upon earth: in these he employed the days of his mortal



life. O let us be glad to follow this great example, as far as our weakness will allow us!

Consider 3dly, the reward that is here promised to the *merciful*, viz. that *they shall obtain mercy*: and that both here, as well temporally, as spiritually, by having their own wants redressed, and their sins forgiven them; and hereafter, by their being *received into everlasting dwellings*, by those, to whom they had here shewn mercy; and finding there the fruit of all the seed of the works of mercy, they had here sown, multiplied to a hundred fold. Alas! how wretched shall the best of us be, if God does not shew us *mercy*! For who can stand the judgment of God, if his *mercy* be set aside! How happy then are they, who by being *merciful* to one another, ensure to themselves the *mercy* of God, to stand by them in the time of need! But on the other hand, how unhappy are they, who refuse to shew mercy to their neighbours! For *judgment without mercy to them that have not done mercy*! saith St. James ii. 13.

Conclude to be ever merciful to thy neighbours, that thou mayest find mercy with God. For *with the same measure you shall mete withal, it shall be measured to you again*, Luke vi. 38. Yea with infinite advantage, according to that of the same gospel: *good measure, and pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall they give into your bosom*. Ibidem.

#### On Cleanness of Heart.

Sept. 7. **C**ONSIDER first, the words of the sixth beatitude, *Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God*. God is not to be seen by the eyes of the body, but only by the eyes of the heart, that is, by the interior eyes of the soul. Now as the bodily eyes, in order to contemplate their proper objects, must be *clean*, (for if any speck interpose itself, and cover the sight, the object cannot be seen) so the interior eye of the soul, in order to see

God, must be *clean*; the sight must not be covered with any speck of earthly dirt; that is, with any disorderly affection to any thing in this world. This *cleanness* of the inward eye requires two things, viz. *simplicity* in the intention, *purity* in the affection: with these two wings, a man is lifted above the things of the earth: *simplicity* aims at God alone; *purity* takes hold of him, embraces him, and adheres to him. *Seek God*, says the wise man, *in simplicity of heart*, (Wisd. i. 1.) that is, in the uprightness and sincerity of a *single* heart; of a heart free from all double dealing, and all the guile of an artful self-seeking, instead of seeking God. Let the *eye* of the intention be *simple*, that is, *single* and sincere, and truly directed to God, and then the *whole body* of the actions *shall be lightsome*, Matt. vi. 22. Let God be the great object of thy love; so as to admit of no affection, that takes off thy heart from him: and thy heart will be truly *pure* and *clean*, and qualified to contemplate and embrace God.

Consider 2dly, the degrees by which we are to ascend to this perfect *purity* and *cleanness* of hearts. The first, and most necessary *purgation*, is from all mortal sin, and from the affections to it. For the heart, that voluntarily admits of the affection to mortal sin, (whether it be the sin of impurity, or any other vice) is absolutely *unclean*, and is possessed by an *unclean* spirit, and therefore can have no share in God. The second *purgation* goes further, and not only settles the soul in a fixed determination, never to consent, upon any account, not even in thought, to any one mortal sin, but also cleanses the heart from all wilful affections to venial sin; and fixes her in a resolution, never, with full deliberation, to commit a known venial sin; much less to indulge any habit or custom of any such sin. All these sins, when fully deliberate, are so many spots and stains, which strangely disfigure the beauty of the soul, make her unworthy of the embraces of her heavenly spouse, and darken the eye of the heart, so as to

disqualify it for the seeing of God. And therefore such spots and stains as these must be purged away, if we would be truly *clean of heart*.

Consider 3dly, that in order to be perfectly *clean of heart*, the heart must also be *purged* from all affection to worldly honours, riches, and pleasures; from all disorderly love of the creature, to the prejudice of the love of the Creator; and from every affection that takes off any part of the heart from God: which indeed is always the case, when we love any person or thing, which we do not love for God's sake, or with a due subordination to the love of God. Whatsoever love cannot stand this test, is more or less an *unclean* love; it divides the heart; it makes the heart *unclean*; it sullies its purity, and disqualifies it for the seeing of God. O see then, my soul, what an evil it is, to suffer any irregular affection to possess thy heart; since it hinders thee from so great a good, even the sight of God, the only true and sovereign good!

Conclude to be ever jealous of the purity of thy heart: labour to purge it more and more, not only from all wilful sin, but also from every earthly affection, that can any ways sully it, or overcloud its inward sight with the exhalations that are always arising from sensual and worldly love.

*On the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin.*

Sept. 8. **C**ONSIDER first, that on this day the Church devoutly celebrates the birthday of the great Queen that brought forth to us the King of heaven, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the source of all our good. This birth of hers was like the first dawning of that happy day, which the Son of God, the true *Sun of Justice*, brought us from heaven; in the light of which if we duly walk, during our mortal pilgrimage, we shall come securely to that blessed day, which knows no night. On this festival of the Blessed Virgin, Mother of God, we ought, in the first place, to praise and bless God,

and to give him thanks for all his graces bestowed upon her; by which he prepared her soul and body, from her very conception, to be a worthy dwelling for his Son, holy and without spot or blemish. 2dly, To honour him in this blessed Virgin, and to rejoice in all the wonders of his power, goodness, and mercy, by which he paved the way for our redemption. 3dly, To shew a true and solid devotion to our blessed Lady, by an earnest application to her for her prayers and intercession, and a zealous imitation of her virtues.

Consider 2dly, the grounds which all good Christians have, and always had, to be devout to the blessed Virgin: as we find in every age, the more eminent any persons have been in the love of Jesus Christ, the more devoted they have also been to his blessed Mother; verifying, by their practice in this regard, that prophecy of hers, (St. *Luke* i.) that *all generations shall call her blessed*. These grounds may be reduced to three heads: her *dignity*, her *sanctity*, and her elevation in *glory*. 1. Her supereminent *dignity of Mother of God*: the nearest *alliance* which any pure creature can have with him. And how can we love him, and not love his mother? 2. Her supereminent *sanctity*; for she was *full of divine grace*, even before she conceived, (St. *Luke* i. 26.); how much more after carrying in her womb, for nine months, the source of all grace and sanctity? And what shall we say of the thirty years she had him always before her eyes, and still more in her heart: and of all the remaining space of her life, during which she was continually growing in grace; God, on his part, never ceasing to bestow with a most bountiful hand, and she, on her part, never receiving his grace in vain, but ever corresponding and co-operating with it, and by this means continually drawing down new blessings? 3. Her supereminent *elevation, in the eternal glory of heaven*, in proportion to the supereminent *grace and sanctity* to which

she arrived here upon earth, (as the one is always the measure of the other) and the *interest* she has with her divine Son in consequence thereof. See, my soul, how many, and how pressing motives thou hast to be devout to this blessed Lady.

Consider s<sup>d</sup>ly, that as God is the sole author, and the original source of all the dignity, sanctity, and glory, which we honour in the blessed Virgin; so all that veneration, which the Catholic Church pays to this blessed Lady, has God both for its beginning and its end. Our devotion to her proceeds from the love we bear her Son: we honour in her his gifts and graces: we love and honour her for his sake; and all the extraordinary respect we at any time shew to her, we refer to his greater glory. So far then from robbing God of any part of his honour, by the veneration we give her, we honour him indeed so much the more, because all this our devotion finally tends to him, and terminates in him. And thus we always find that such as are truly devout to the blessed Virgin, fail not to be also true lovers of God, and *pursuers of all good works*.

Conclude to embrace this devotion to our blessed Lady, as an excellent means to advance thee in all good: but do not imagine thyself to be truly devout to her, if thou art no ways solicitous to imitate her virtues. True devotion loves, esteems, and honours, in her, that which God loves, esteems, and honours, viz. her virtues and sanctity. And how can we better shew our love, esteem, and honour for virtue and sanctity, than by labouring to imitate it?

#### *On being Peace-Makers.*

Sept. 9. **C**ONSIDER first, the words of the seventh beatitude: *Blessed are the peace-makers: for they shall be called the children of God.* God's own abode is in eternal *peace*: and the heavenly *Jerusalem* is the *vision* and enjoyment of an undisturbed everlasting *peace*. They therefore that truly love *peace*, and as much as lies in them,

both keep it in themselves, and with all others, and contribute all they can to make peace among such as are at variãce with one another, and to bring all their neighbours to be at peace with God, are entitled to this beatitude, and to the glorious character of *children of God*. O how amiable is this spirit of peace ! how blessed are its fruits ! It is the paradise of the soul ; it makes a kind of heaven upon earth. O may this *peace of God, which surpasseth all understanding, keep both our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus our Lord, Philip. iii. 7.*

Consider 3dly, the different ways there are of being *peace makers*, with relation to our neighbours, with relation to ourselves, and with relation to God. It is a blessed thing to bring our neighbours to *peace*, and mutual charity : as it is an abomination in the sight of God, to *sow discord among brethren*, Prov. vi. 19. It is a more blessed thing, to make *peace* at home in our own souls, by suppressing the rebellious disorders of our passions, by bringing the flesh under subjection to the spirit, the inferior part of the soul to the superior, and the superior to God. It is the most blessed thing of all, to bring both ourselves, and as many others as we can, to a constant and perfect *peace* with God ; that he may reign without controul in all our souls ; that his kingdom may be perfectly established within us ; that his holy will, his holy law, his grace, and his peace, may live in us and with us for ever. O happy peace indeed, that unites us here to God by grace, and hereafter in eternal glory.

Consider 3dly, the reward promised in this beatitude to the *peace-makers* : *they shall be called the children of God*. O reflect, my soul, what a dignity here is, to be children of so great a King, even the King that made heaven and earth. *Behold what manner of charity, saith St. John (1 John iii. 1.) the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called and should be the sons of God.* Sons of God even now by his grace, bearing a resemblance with his

true Son, (who is styled in scripture *the prince of peace*) and as such in a particular manner loved, cherished, and protected by him here as a Parent; and hereafter to be admitted to a more perfect likeness, union, and, as it were, transformation into him, according to that of the same apostle, v. 2. *Dearly beloved, we are now the sons of God; and it hath not yet appeared what we shall be. We know that when he shall appear, we shall be like unto him: because we shall see him as he is.* O, Christians, what blessings both for time and eternity are prepared for the lovers and promoters of peace!

Conclude, my soul, to endeavour to be always a friend, and a *child of peace*, and the *peace* of God shall always rest upon thee, (Luke x. 6.) and never leave thee till it bring thee to the region of everlasting peace.

*On the Means of preserving and maintaining the Peace of the Soul.*

Sept. 10. **C**ONSIDER first, that it is of great advantage to the soul, both in order to defend her from all evil, and to advance her in all good, to keep herself always in *peace* within her own interior: because this inward *peace*, when it is *true*, brings along with it courage, strength, and grace, by the favours which God always shews to the truly *peaceable*. Now the first, and most necessary means, for the acquiring or preserving of this peace in the soul, must be to banish all wilful sin from the soul; for there can be no *true peace* where wilful sin resides. For no one can be at war with God, and have any peace within himself, except it be that *false peace*, which is sometimes formed by an erroneous conscience, that shuts its eyes against God's light, that it may not be obliged to embrace his truth. O, dear Jesus, never let me be so miserable as to be deluded by any such false peace, or ever to be a rebel to thy light!

Consider 2dly, that the true peace of the soul is

not to be acquired without subduing the passions, and keeping them in order. For what peace can there be in the midst of daily storms, tumults, and rebellions; such as are raised by headstrong and untamed passions? What peace can there be for the slaves of pride and ambition, of avarice and worldly solicitude, of wrath and envy, &c. Alas, all these, and the like passions, disturb and disquiet the soul; they put her in a ferment; they suffer her not to find any solid rest or tranquillity, or any manner of share in that calmness and evenness of soul which those enjoy that are perfectly masters of themselves, by the victory they have acquired over all their passions. O how true it is, that our peace and happiness, even here, is not to be found by yielding to our disorderly inclinations; but by mortifying and overcoming them!

Consider 3dly, that the way to acquire true peace, and true liberty of soul, is thus marked out by a servant of God, (*Following of Christ*, l. 3. ch. 23.): ‘ Endeavour, my Son, rather to do the will of another than thy own: ever choose to have rather less than more: always seek the lowest place, and to be inferior to every one: always wish and pray that the will of God may be entirely fulfilled in thee. Behold such a man as this enters upon the coasts of peace and rest.’ Whosoever will but observe these rules shall not easily be disquieted, but rather shall meet with a paradise of delights in his soul. And we shall find upon examination, that whenever we are disturbed, it is because we have transgressed some or other of these rules; either by being too much bent upon our own will, or by the desires of having more, or of being higher; or at least by not being entirely resigned to the will of God.

Conclude to set out in quest of this happy way that leads to true peace, by giving up thy own desires, and ever embracing the holy will of God.



*On suffering Persecution for Justice sake.*

Sept. 11. **C**ONSIDER first, these words of the eighth beatitude: *Blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.* And again, *Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all that is evil against you, untruly, for my sake: be glad and rejoice, for your reward is very great in heaven.* O how opposite is this gospel doctrine to all the sentiments of flesh and blood! Alas! we have naturally so little relish for such sufferings as these, that we are apt to pity all those, and look upon them as unhappy and miserable, that are exposed to such kind of evils; and so far from rejoicing, when it is our own case, we are too often dejected and sorrowful. But surely we are in the wrong: since truth itself, that cannot be deceived, not only assures us that these sufferings are the way to be *blessed*, that is, to be *happy* hereafter; but that even now, whilst we are actually suffering, we *are* in very deed happy, and *blessed*; and therefore he calls upon us *to be glad and rejoice* under the experience of these reputed evils, as being indeed real goods in our regard, by their manifold fruits they produce, both in time and eternity.

Consider 2dly, what these fruits are, that proceed from suffering for Christ's sake, and for his justice. They are fruits of grace here, and of glory hereafter. These kind of sufferings wean the soul from the love of this world, and of all its empty toys, and short-lived enjoyments; and give her a longing desire after her true home, the happy region of truth and of life, the sight and enjoyment of her sovereign good. These sufferings entitle the soul to the sweet consolations of the Holy Ghost, which are usually bestowed more abundantly, in proportion to the greatness of the suffering; according to that of the psalmist (Ps. xciii. 19.): *According to the multitude of my sorrows*

*in my heart thy comforts have given joy to my soul.* These sufferings give the soul a relish for the cross, and a new kind of love for her crucified Saviour. These sufferings teach her humility, meekness, patience, conformity to the will of God, with all the other lessons that are to be learnt in the school of the cross; besides the happy opportunity they afford the soul of discharging the debt of punishment due for former sins, by offering up to God, and bearing in a Christian manner, these present afflictions.

Consider 3dly, that the principal fruits of these sufferings are reserved, to be gathered in another life: according to that of the apostle, *Rom. viii. 17, 18. If we suffer with Christ, we shall be glorified with him: for the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come, that shall be revealed in us.* And again, (*2 Cor. iv. 17.*) *Our present tribulation, which is momentary and light, worketh for us above measure exceedingly an eternal weight of glory.* O look forward, my soul, into this immense eternity, and contemplate the infinite rewards that are there laid up, to recompense our little sufferings here; and learn to *be glad and rejoice* in the experience of these small temporal afflictions; because these put thee in the true way to joys that shall never end: and the greater thy sufferings are here, the greater shall be these joys hereafter.

Conclude not to pretend to a life without sufferings, if thou hopest to live for ever with God: but then take care not to draw down these sufferings upon thy head by any crime: for this would not be *suffering for justice sake.* Give ear to St. Peter (*1 Pet. iv. 15, 16*): *Let none of you suffer as a murderer, or a thief, or a railer, or a coveter of other men's things: but if as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this name.*

*On the Virtue of Patience.*

Sept. 12. **C**ONSIDER first, that *patience* is a virtue, by which we bear up with courage and constancy under a variety of evils to which we are continually exposed in this mortal life: such as afflictions, exterior or interior, sicknesses, pains of body or mind, losses, disappointments, want, affronts, injuries, and other crosses of diverse kinds, which more or less are incident to men, in every station of life, and in every part of life, from the king to the beggar, and from our childhood to our decrepid age. Now under all these evils, the good Christian is supported by the virtue of *patience*, in such a manner as neither to be over-much dejected, or cast down by any cross accidents or sufferings; nor upon these occasions to be put out of the road of virtue, or hindered from the love and service of God; but so as still to go on with courage in his way to heaven, carrying his cross after his Redeemer without murmuring or repining. O, my soul, how lovely is this Christian patience! It has even the admirable property of turning all the evils of life into so many great and solid goods, by making them all serviceable to eternity: and in the meantime it makes them both light and easy, and sweetens all that is bitter in them, by seasoning them with the consideration of the holy will of God.

Consider 2dly, how much this virtue of *patience* is recommended to us by the great example of the Son of God; who, as he was never free from sufferings in any part of his life, so he both lived and died in the exercise of *patience*; and by his *patience* redeemed the world. Then all the Saints and martyrs, as they had their share in drinking of his cup of sufferings, so they have all *run by patience to the fight set before them: looking on Jesus the author and finisher of faith, who having joy set before him endured the cross*, Heb. xii. 1, 2. They all in life *possessed their souls in their patience*, (Luke xxi. 19): they all in

death saved their souls by *patience*. *Patience hath a perfect work*, saith St. James, (i. 4.) *that you may be perfect and entire, failing in nothing*. He that is *patient*, saith the wise man, (Prov. xiv. 29.) *is governed with much wisdom*. And again, (Prov. xvi. 32.) *The patient man is better than the valiant, and he that ruleth his spirit, than he that taketh cities*. *Patience* then is the virtue of the martyrs and of all the Saints; *patience* made them martyrs and Saints; *patience* made them truly wise; *patience* gave them the victory over all their enemies; in their *patience* they brought forth much fruit; *patience* made them perfect; *patience* brought them to that incorruptible crown, which is given to none but those who by *patience* have lawfully strove for it, and won it. O blessed *patience*! let me be so happy as to find thee, and embrace thee: let me live and die in thy company!

Consider 3dly, the absolute necessity of *patience*, in order to our serving God here, and saving our souls hereafter. *Patience is necessary for you*, saith the apostle, (Heb. x. 36.) *that doing the will of God, you may receive the promise*. For our life is a warfare upon earth: and in every part of life we must expect to meet with trials, conflicts, and sufferings. Now *patience* turns all these to our good: but where *patience* is wanting, all goes wrong; we sin at every step; we cowardly give up the cause of God, and our souls, upon every slight occasion; we withdraw ourselves from the service which we were happily engaged in; we run from our colours: we fall a prey to the enemy. O, it is true, that as there is no going to heaven but *through many tribulations*; (Acts xiv. 21.) so there is no securing to ourselves that blessed kingdom, but by much *patience*.

Conclude to give ear again to the admonitions of the Spirit of God, (Ecclus. ii.) *Son, when thou comest to the service of God, stand in justice, and in fear, and prepare thy soul for temptation. Humble thy heart, and endure—wait on God with patience; join thyself to God, and endure—take all that shall*

*be brought upon thee, and in thy sorrow endure, and in thy humiliation keep patience: for gold and silver are tried in the fire: but acceptable men in the furnace of humiliation. Happy they that practise these lessons!*

*On the Means of acquiring Patience.*

Sept. 13. **C**ONSIDER first, that *patience*, like all other good things, is to be acquired, by desiring, by seeking, by praying for it: but, by desiring it earnestly, by seeking it diligently, by praying for it fervently. *If any one want this true wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all abundantly, and it shall be given him: but let him ask in faith, nothing wavering,* St. James i. 5, 6. But how shall we heartily desire, seek, or pray, for that which we have little or no esteem for? Wherefore the first step towards acquiring patience, is to study to know its true value, and the great treasures it brings along with it to the soul which is so happy as to find it. Now this knowledge must come by consideration and meditation on the manifold fruits it produces, both for this world and the next: here a complete victory over all our enemies, peace of soul, true liberty, and dominion over our passions, with an abundance of other graces; and hereafter all those sublime rewards that are promised to the conquerors, (*Apocal. ii. and iii.*) *To him that overcometh, I will give to eat of the tree of life, that is in the paradise of my God,* Apoc. ii. 7. *He that shall overcome, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go out no more, and I will write upon him the name of my God, &c.* Apoc. iii. 12. *And to him that shall overcome, I will give to sit with me in my throne, &c.* verse 21.

Consider 2dly, that in order to acquire patience, it will be of great service to us, in all our afflictions, pains, or other sufferings, to reflect on these three points: first, upon what we have deserved by our sins; and how very little what we suffer is, in comparison with what we ought to suffer, if we had our

deserts: 2dly, upon the sufferings the Son of God endured for our sins, out of pure love of us; and the patience with which he endured them: 3dly, on the holy will of God, who sends us these sufferings, and sends them for our greater good; who knows what is best for us, and orders all things for the best, if we leave ourselves to him. Ah! how vain it is for us to resist his mighty hand! How foolish and sinful not to submit to the dispositions of him that is infinitely wise and infinitely good! See, my soul, what a large field for meditation is here opened to us, in these three points! what motives for patience under all our sufferings!

Consider 3dly, in order to be more in earnest in seeking to acquire the virtue of patience, the manifold evils we are exposed to by impatience; in a long train of sins against God, against our neighbours, and against ourselves, which proceed from this unhappy source: murmurings and rebellions against God; uncharitable censures, and rash judgments, perpetual animosities, quarrels, and desires of revenge, against our neighbours; desires of our own death, though infinitely unfit for it; continual uneasiness with ourselves, desponding thoughts, and a strange sluggishness, as to taking any pains for the salvation of the soul. Such are usually the wretched fruits of impatience: and what can be worse? *faith* is lulled asleep, it is quite dead; hope is forgot; the love of our God, and of our neighbours is lost; prayer is neglected; the care of the soul is flung away. And in the meantime the evils under which we labour, instead of being redressed, become more grievous and more intolerable, by our impatient resistance of the holy will of God; we lose the benefit of our sufferings, and we forfeit all the comforts which God usually affords to patient sufferers. Ah! my soul, how does this impatience of ours make our sufferings resemble those of the damned, who suffer without merit, and without comfort, resisting in vain the will of the Almighty.

Conclude to pray, and to labour in earnest for acquiring the virtue of patience: it will make all thy sufferings light and easy, and entitle them to an eternal reward. Whenever thou art visited with any cross, of what kind soever, always consider it as coming from the hand of God, presently accept of it, and offer it up to Jesus Christ crucified, to be united to his sufferings, to be sanctified through him, and accepted of by his Father, for his own greater glory, and the remission of thy sins. O how happy shalt thou be, if, under all thy sufferings, thou make this thy practice!

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*On the Exaltation of the Cross.*

Sept. 14. **C**ONSIDER first, that on this day, upon occasion of the recovery of the cross of Christ out of the hands of infidels, and the triumphant setting it up again in its place, in the church of Mount Calvary; the church of God celebrates *the exaltation of him* that died for us upon the cross, and his glorious triumph over sin and death; and over all the powers of hell; and in consequence thereof the establishment of his kingdom, by which he reigns by grace at present, in the souls of all his servants throughout the world; and shall reign in them for all eternity hereafter in glory. According to that of St. John xii. 31, 32, spoken with relation to his victory on the cross. *Now is the judgment (that is the condemnation) of the world, now shall the prince of this world (the devil) be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all things to myself.* Rejoice, O my soul, in the triumphs of thy crucified king; and beg that he would establish his reign in thee, and draw up thy heart from this wretched earth, and unite it for ever to himself.

Consider 2dly, that the disposition of a Christian, in order to celebrate in a proper manner the feast of the *exaltation of the cross*, ought to be suitable to the maxims of the cross, and to the dispositions of Christ crucified. Dispositions, of standing off from the

pride, ambition, avarice, and vanity of the world, condemned by the poverty and humility of the cross; as also from the love of sensual and worldly pleasures, condemned by the mortification of the cross. Dispositions, of taking up our crosses, and following our crucified King, even to the death of the cross. Dispositions, of waging a perpetual war against that triple concupiscence, which separates worldlings from the cross of Christ, viz. *the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life*: till dying to the world, and to ourselves, we *be lifted up with Christ from the earth*; crucified to the world, and the world to us; and thus be entitled to a share in his exaltation and triumphs. But, O my soul, how unfit are we to celebrate the victories of our crucified King, over death, sin, and hell, whilst we by pride, self-love, and the love of the world, wilfully remain slaves to these same enemies, whose usurpation he sought to abolish by his death!

Consider 3dly, the sentiments of St. Paul with relation to the cross of Christ, *Gal. ii. 19, 20. With Christ I am nailed to the cross. And I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me: who loved me and delivered himself for me*, chap. vi. 14. *God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified to me, and I to the world.* He tells the Corinthians, (*1 Cor. ii. 2.*) that he *judged not himself to know any thing among them but Jesus Christ, and him crucified*, and (*chap. i. 23, 24.*) that he preached nothing but *Christ crucified, a stumbling block to the Jews, and foolishness to the Gentiles*; but to the true believers *the power of God, and the wisdom of God.* He proposes his own conduct as a model to the Philippians, (*Philip. iii. 17, 18.*) and warns them, with tears, against all sensual and earthly minded Christians, whom he calls *enemies of the cross of Christ.* O how high was the cross of Christ *exalted* in the heart of the apostle? It reigned there without controul. And as it was *exalted* in him by love and esteem; so it *exalted* him here to the glorious *fellowship of the sufferings of*



Christ crucified, and hereafter to that eternal kingdom which our Lord has purchased by his cross, for all the true friends and followers of the cross. O how happy are all they, that like the apostle, are sincere lovers of the cross of Christ!

Conclude, for thy own practice, to honour the triumphs of thy crucified king, by planting thyself at the foot of his cross, and there constantly attending to him, and studying well the lessons he teaches thee from his cross, and entering into all his sentiments. He will teach thee to submit to thy crosses with patience, to undergo them with cheerfulness, yea to embrace them with joy. He will undeceive thee, with regard to the false maxims of worldly pride, of the love of riches, and of sensual pleasures; and from his cross will preach to thee his truths, and discover to thee the lovely charms that are found in humility, poverty of spirit, contempt of the world, and mortification of the flesh. His cross is the school in which he will teach thee all good, and from which he will not cease to communicate to thee all grace; till at length he draw thee up to himself, and make thee his own for ever.

*On the Presence of God.*

Sept. 15. **C**ONSIDER first, that it is a most certain truth, an article of faith, which no Christian can be allowed to doubt of, that the great God who made us all, the eternal, incomprehensible, infinite Majesty, in whose comparison the whole creation is a mere nothing, is every where present, is truly and really in every place, and in every being; so that wheresoever we are, and whithersoever we go, God is there, and is there with all his divine attributes, the whole Deity, the whole Blessed Trinity is there. *Shall a man be hid in secret places, and I not see him, saith the Lord? Do not I fill heaven and earth, saith the Lord?* Jeremias xxiii. 24. And Psalm cxxxviii. *Whither shall I go from thy spirit? Or whither shall I flee from thy face? If I ascend up into heaven thou art there: if I*

*descend into hell thou art there, &c.* And do all Christians know this truth, and yet dare to sin? Alas! they cannot here justly plead ignorance: because it is one of the first things they have been taught from their very childhood. But their misery is, they think so little of God, or his divine presence, that they quite forget it: so that we may say to them, with regard to the presence of God, what St. John Baptist said to the Jews, with regard to their Messiah, (*St. John i. 26.*) *there hath stood one in the midst of you whom you know not.* O how little indeed is this great God known, even by too many that call themselves Christians!

Consider 2dly, that God being every where present, is witness of all our thoughts, words, and actions: he sees and hears all that passes: nothing can be concealed from him; no not even the most secret motions and dispositions of the soul. He is the *searcher of the reins and hearts*, (*Apoc. ii. 23.*) *reaching to the division of the soul, and of the spirit, and is a discerner of the thoughts, and of the intents of the heart: neither is there any creature invisible in his sight, but all things are naked, and open to his eyes*, *Heb. iv. 12, 13.* It is in vain then for the sinner to flatter himself, like the libertine, mentioned by the wise man, (*Ecclus. xxiii. 25, &c.*) that saith, *Who seeth me? Darkness compasseth me about, and the walls cover me, and no man seeth me. Whom do I fear?* And in the meantime he considereth not that darkness and light are alike to the Lord, (*Ps. cxxxviii. 12.*) and that *his eyes are far brighter than the sun, beholding round about all the ways of men, and the bottom of the deep, and looking into their hearts, into the most secret parts.* O that men would always remember these great truths!

Consider 3dly, that God is not only really present *with us*, in every place, and sees all that passes, but is really present *within us*; fills our whole soul, and is more truly, perfectly, and intimately in the very centre of the soul, giving, preserving and main-

taining its very life and being, than the soul is in the body which it animates, and to which it gives life and motion. He is the life of all lives; and the being of all beings; and were he to withdraw his presence, though it were but for one moment, from any being whatsoever, in that moment it would cease to be, and would return to its ancient nothing. *In him we live, and move, and be*, saith the apostle, *Acts xvii. 28.* So that we are not only encompassed with the Deity on all sides, as the birds are with the air in which they fly, or the fishes with the waters of the ocean; but are in such manner penetrated by him, that he fills every part of our being with his whole self; so that it is strictly and literally true, that we are always in him, and he in us. What an aggravation then must it be to the guilt of all our sins, that they not only are committed against God, and before his own eyes; but are committed in God himself, in whom we live, move, and be?

Conclude by regretting thy having thought so little hitherto of the presence of God; by which he is both in all places and in all things, and more especially in the midst of thyself. Resolve to have this truth ever before thy eyes for the time thou hast yet to come. O let us strive, my soul, to be always with him who is always with us.

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*On the Exercise of the Presence of God.*

Sept, 16. **C**ONSIDER first, that a lively sense of the presence of God is a sovereign means to banish sin from the world; to bring the worst of sinners back to God; to spur on the lukewarm, and make them fervent; and to advance the just in all virtue, till it bring them to perfection: according to that which God spoke to his servant Abraham, (*Gen. xvii. 1.*) *Walk before me, and be perfect*: as if he should have said; in all thy conversation, and in every step thou shalt take in thy mortal pilgrimage, keep thyself in my presence, by the remembrance of me, and thou shalt be perfect in all

virtue. This holy patriarch, and all the ancient fathers, observed this lesson, of whom it is written, that they *walked with God*, or that they *walked in the sight of God*, Gen. xlviii. 15. The Psalmist practised the same, (Ps. xv. 5.) *I set the Lord*, saith he, *always in my sight*: and he calls upon all others to do the like, (Ps. civ. 4.) *Seek ye the Lord, and be strengthened: seek his face* (that is his presence) *always*. This same has ever been the practice of all the Saints: yea it is this has made them Saints.

Consider 2dly, that this exercise of the presence of God, is to be performed, partly by the understanding, and partly by the will: for as the blessed in heaven are eternally employed about God, partly by the contemplation and vision of him, which belongs to the understanding, and partly by love and fruition, which belongs to the will; and by this means they are eternally happy in the enjoyment of this sovereign and infinite good; and eternally united, both by will and understanding, to the source of all happiness: so the souls of God's servants here upon earth, ought, in both these ways, to apply themselves to God, and to be employed about him; and this is done by the exercise of his divine presence; which employs the understanding in the thought and remembrance of him, by means of a lively faith, and sense of his being always with us, and within us; and entertains the will, that is the heart and the affection, with him, by continually turning it towards him, by aspirations of love, by oblations of our whole being to him, and by longing desires after the embraces of him, and an eternal union with him. O how happy is this exercise of the presence of God, which by a perpetual application of all the powers of the soul to God, in some measure anticipates the immortal joys of heaven.

Consider 3dly, that in order to learn, and to practise this heavenly exercise of the presence of God, we must rid our souls of three mortal enemies to this devotion: which are, a dissipation of mind; an anxi-

ous solicitude for the things of this world ; and a disorderly affection to creatures. Where these three, or any one of the three, reigns in the soul, God is usually forgot. *A dissipation* of thought carries the soul from home, to run after a multitude of vain amusements, where she loses the remembrance both of herself, and of her God. *Worldly solicitude* choaks all better thoughts, and suffers them not to take root in the soul. And the *disorderly affections* of the heart, to any things out of God, turn away the heart from God. In order, then, to practise this necessary attention to the presence of God, we must banish *dissipation*, by *recollection* of thought : we must overcome *worldly solicitude*, by *faith*, and *confidence* in God, and by a conformity in all things with his blessed will : and we must correct the *irregularity* of our *affections*, by turning them from the creature to God.

Conclude to guard against these enemies, by setting a watch, both upon thy roving imagination, which is ever fond of running after butterflies ; and thy unwary heart, that is so easily taken in the nets of wanton love, or other idle, vain, and worldly affections : and to accustom all the powers of thy soul to be employed about their God ; who is to make them happy for eternity.

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*On the Advantages of this Exercise of the Presence of God.*

Sept. 17. **C**ONSIDER first, that as the forgetting of God is the source of all our sins, so the remembrance of his divine presence is the source of all our good ; it is of infinite advantage both to sinners and saints. It is a sovereign and universal remedy for overcoming all sorts of temptations, by its placing the soul near the source of all light and grace, and hiding her as it were under the divine wings ; and its putting at the same time a most powerful and effectual restraint upon her, from daring to offend that tremendous Majesty. For who

shall dare, by sin, to commit high treason against God, who sees God before him, and himself surrounded with God? or who shall dare to affront the divine justice, who has a lively sense of its being so very near him, and that it stands always turned against wilful sinners? O it is true, that the consideration of the eye of God being always upon us, has obliged the most abandoned sinners to put a stop at once to their wicked ways, and to betake themselves to a life of penance. It was the case of the famous Thais, who upon this consideration was suddenly determined to quit both her sins and the world, and to withdraw herself into the remotest parts of the Desert; where shut up in a loathsome cell, she spent the remainder of her days in weeping, and doing penance for her sins.

Consider 2dly, that a lively sense of the presence of God excites us also to perform all our works with due perfection, in order to please him, whose eye is always upon us; as the master's eye makes the servant more diligent. It helps to purify our intention in all things, by drawing it to God. It cures our lukewarmness; it dissipates our distractions; it teaches us to pray; it makes us fervent in all our addresses to the divine Majesty; it keeps us humble on all occasions; and perfectly annihilates the soul, seeing herself placed so near to so great a God. And as the soul, that has a due sense of the presence of God, knows that wheresoever he is, he has all his attributes with him; his almighty power, his infinite wisdom, goodness, and mercy; his perpetual providence, and loving kindness for his children, together with all the treasures of his divine graces; such a soul as this finds, in the thought of God's presence, a source of unspeakable comfort in all her tribulations, of counsel in all her doubts, of succour in all her necessities, and a continual attraction to the love of him. O how easy must it be to be a saint, with such helps as these! Now all these graces, and more, are laid up

for thee, my soul, if thou wilt duly exercise thyself in the presence of God.

Consider 3dly, the practical inferences we ought to make, from our faith of the presence of God ; that is, what we are bound to do, in consequence of our believing that God is every where, with us, and in us. 1. God's being every where, requires of us, that we should every where take notice of his presence. For can there be an object more worthy of our attention ? And will he not then be justly offended, if, while we amuse ourselves about every trifle that comes in our way, we let our God, the Sovereign Beauty, and the Sovereign Good, pass unregarded ? 2. God being every where present, requires of us, both a modest comportment on all occasions, as to our exterior : *Let your modesty*, says St. Paul, (*Philip. iv. 5.*) *be known to all men, the Lord is nigh* : and a most profound respect, as to our interior, considering that infinite Majesty, in whose sight we stand. 3. God being every where present, every where requires our love : for wherever we are, we have him with us, who is infinitely lovely, and infinitely loving ; infinitely good in himself, and infinitely good to us : and therefore, wherever we are, he challenges our love. O turn thyself then, my soul, from all these earthly toys, to this thy sovereign good, which is so near to thee : run to his embraces, and dedicate thyself eternally to his divine love.

Conclude never to regret thy being alone, since thou hast always in thy company that great God, the sight and enjoyment of whom is the eternal felicity of the angels. No company can be more honourable, none more advantageous ; since thou hast here the inexhausted source of all good. His conversation is most delightful : the sweetest repose is to be found in him : all other recreations are vain, if compared with this.

*On the Virtue of Obedience.*

Sept. 18. **C**ONSIDER first, that *obedience* is a virtue, which teaches us readily to embrace, and diligently to put in execution, whatever is commanded us, either immediately by God himself, or by our lawful superiors, who have their authority from God, and whom he wills and commands us to submit to, as to himself, and to obey for his sake, 1 *Pet.* ii. 13. This virtue, like humility her mother, is the special favourite of heaven: as God has abundantly declared, by preferring on many occasions, our obedience before all other sacrifices we can offer him. *Doth the Lord desire holocausts and victims*, said Samuel to Saul, (1 *Sam.* xv. 22, 23.) *and not rather that his voice should be obeyed? For obedience is better than sacrifices, and to hearken, rather than to the fat of rams: because it is like the sin of witchcraft to rebel, and like the crime of Idolatry, to refuse to obey, viz. inasmuch as disobedience gives away from God, and makes over to his enemy, the best offering our poor stock can afford, that is our will: now our will he chiefly calls for; and whatsoever else we give him, it is all nothing, as long as we refuse to give him our will by obedience. The sacrifice of our hearts he calls for, and not for that of our flocks, or of any other things we can give him without obedience.*

Consider 2dly, how precious in the sight of God this virtue of *obedience* must be, since he singled it out amongst all virtues, to be the proper exercise of our first parents, immediately upon their creation, in the earthly paradise, that by the acts of it they might acknowledge their dependance on their Creator, shew their inviolable fidelity to him, and merit, by their perseverance in *obedience*, an eternal union with him. The happiness, or misery, both of them, and of all their posterity, that is, of all mankind, both for time and eternity, was to be determined by their *obedience*, or disobedience. But O



the dismal train of evils they have entailed upon us all, by withdrawing their necks from the sweet yoke of *obedience* ! Evils, that must have been without remedy, for eternity, had not the *obedience* of the second Adam stepped in, to cancel the *disobedience* of the first Adam ; according to that of the apostle, (*Rom. v. 19.*) *As by the disobedience of one man many were made sinners ; so by the obedience of one man many shall be made just.* The *disobedience* of the first *parents of our flesh* involved us all in sin : the *obedience* of the true parent of our spirit has purchased all mercy, grace, and salvation for our souls. But all this good, purchased for us by the *obedience* of the Son of God, is not to be ours, but upon condition of our returning to our duty, by *obedience* to him, who *became the cause of eternal salvation to all that obey him,* Heb. v. 9.

Consider 3dly, that all such as have pleased God from the beginning, have all been eminent in the virtue of *obedience*. This joined with *faith*, made Abraham the favourite of God, and procured for him, that all generations should *be blessed in his seed*. This was the virtue of all the patriarchs and prophets, and of all the saints of God. Rather to die, than not to obey, was the general maxim of all the saints. But the great pattern of obedience was the Saint of saints, whose whole life, from the first instant of his conception till his expiring upon the cross, was one continued exercise of the most consummate obedience. All the thoughts, words, and actions of his mortal life, were the fruits of obedience : they were all levelled at doing his Father's will, and obeying his commandments. *I came down from heaven, says he, (John vi. 38.) not to do my own will, but the will of him that sent me. My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, that I may perfect his work,* John iv. 34. *I seek not my own will, but the will of him that sent me,* John v. 30. *I lay down my life of myself, and I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again. This commandment have I receiv-*

ed of my Father, John x. 18. *I have not spoken of myself, but the Father who sent me, he gave me commandment what I should say, and what I should speak, &c.* John xii. 49. *He humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross,* (Philip. ii. 8.) that we might enter into the like sentiments of perpetual obedience and humility, ver. 5. And shall not this great example of the Son of God himself inspire us with an ardent desire of living and dying in the arms of obedience?

Conclude, if thou desirest to please God, to offer him continually the sacrifice of thy heart, will, and liberty, by perfect obedience; to God himself for his own sake, and to every human creature for God's sake, (1 Pet. ii. 13.) that is, to all that have authority from God over thee, whether in church, or in state. In obeying them thou obeyest God, (Luke x. 16.); in resisting them, thou resistest the ordinance of God, to thy own damnation, Rom. xiii. 2.

*On the Fruits of Obedience.*

Sept. 19. **C**ONSIDER first, that one of the deepest wounds sin has left in the soul of man, is a love of independance; a desire of being his own master, and of living, and acting, according to his own inclinations, without being controuled by rule, or law, or by the will of any other. Ah! here is the seat of pride, the throne of self-love, and the source of all the worst of our passions. Now the virtue that heals this wound is holy *obedience*: which strikes at the root of all these evils, in as much as it casts down that pride, which always affects liberty and independance; drives self-love out of all its intrenchments; keeps all the passions under, by obliging them all to submit to the will and law of God, and to the commands of every vicerent of his; and ceases not, till it has bound up that tyrant *self-will*, and laid him as a holocaust, to burn and evaporate on the altar of God. And are not these, my soul, most admirable fruits, which

this blessed obedience produces, by a resolute subjection of our own will to the will of God, and to every lawful superior for God's sake.

Consider 2dly, what mischief is continually produced in the soul by *self-love*, wherever it reigns; to the end thou mayest set a greater value upon the virtue of *obedience*, which gets the victory over this hellish monster, the source of all our vices. Give ear to St. Bernard, (Serm. de Resurrect.) 'Self-will,' says he, 'is a perpetual enemy to God; it wages a most cruel war against him. What does God hate? What does he punish at any time, but self-will? Take away self-will, and there shall be no hell: for what is there, that raging fire can take hold on, but self-will?—This fury attacks the Lord of Majesty: it withdraws itself from his command, making itself its own master,—and as much as lies in it, it robs him of all that is his.' He adds, 'that it sets no bounds to its pretensions, that the whole creation cannot satisfy its demands, that it sets itself up in opposition to the Creator himself.' Yes, Christians, but this is not all: where this monster reigns, it does not only fill the soul with all kind of evils; it even blights and corrupts the very best of her actions: insomuch that where a man does not strive to overcome himself, and to subdue self-will, his virtue will be found to be false and counterfeit, and all his labours in the service of God, or his neighbours, useless and fruitless, as being only the productions of his own humour, his pride, and self-love, and not done for God. See, then, my soul, how much it imports thee to get rid of this self-will, this mother of all mischief; and to acquire a perfect victory over it by the virtue of *obedience*.

Consider 3dly, the other manifold blessings that attend the true children of *obedience*, as fruits of this excellent tree. A life of perpetual *obedience*, is a perpetual victory over the world, the flesh, and the devil: according to that of the wise man, (*Prov. xxi.*

28.) *An obedient man shall speak of victory*: whereas the disobedient man is a slave to all these enemies. Obedience is a perpetual sacrifice, like a whole burnt-offering, by which a man offers his whole will, and all its offspring, to God. It is a daily growing store of virtue and merit: it gives a double value to all our good actions, and consecrates the most indifferent, such as eating, drinking, sleeping, &c. and makes them highly acceptable in the sight of God. It leads us directly to God, and clearly points out to us, in every thing, his holy will, the unerring rule of all our good. In fine, it brings the soul to a secure and sweet peace of mind, and to a certain paradise of contentment and joy in the Lord, and in the accomplishment of his blessed will; because the more the soul seeks, and loves, follows, and embraces by means of holy *obedience*, this divine will of her God, the more she relishes his sweetness, the more confidently she flings herself into his arms, and the more securely she leaves herself, and all things else, to his disposal, and commits all her pretensions and interests to him. O how truly wise then are all they, that embrace with their whole souls this sweet yoke of obedience! They are walking in the royal way, that leads to peace here, and to heavenly bliss hereafter.

Conclude to set a great value upon this virtue of obedience, as the eldest daughter of humility, and nursing mother of all other virtues. In every station of life, obey them to whom God has given any authority over you, as God himself: it is his will you should do so: and he has never shewn more remarkable judgments, than upon those who have refused to obey the authority established by him. The Son of God, during his whole life, was not only obedient to his Father, but also his own creatures, to the blessed Virgin, to St. Joseph, to every one in authority, and even to his very executioners. O let us learn to imitate him!

*On keeping the Commandments.*

Sept. 20. **C**ONSIDER first, that there is no salvation for us, without keeping the ten commandments. They are a short abatract of that natural and eternal law, which was imprinted in the heart of man from the beginning, before the written law was delivered to the people of God. They were published by the Almighty, in a most solemn manner, from Mount Sina, in the Old Testament, and confirmed by the Son of God in the New Testament; declaring the observance of them to be a necessary condition to everlasting life. *If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments*, Matt. xix. 17. The keeping of these he will have to be the test and proof of our love of him: *If you love me, keep my commandments*, John xiv. 15. And his beloved disciple assures us, (1 John ii. 4.) that *he that saith he knoweth him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But he that keepeth his commandments, abideth in him, and he in him*, chap. iii. 24. See then, my soul, that the most necessary of all devotions, is to dedicate thyself to the love and observance of the commandments of God: no devotion can bring thee to God without this. This is that instrument with ten strings, so often recommended by the Psalmist, which makes a most agreeable harmony in the ears of his divine Majesty.

Consider 2dly, the happiness, in every kind, that always accompanies the keeping of God's holy law and commandments: as the same Royal Prophet-witnesses in many places, particularly in the 118th psalm, which is full of testimonies to this effect. And in the 18th psalm, *The law of the Lord, saith he, is unspotted, converting souls: the testimony of the Lord is faithful, giving wisdom to little ones: the justices of the Lord are right, rejoicing hearts: the commandment of the Lord is lightsome, enlightening*

*the eyes. The fear of the Lord is holy, enduring for ever and ever : the judgments of the Lord are true, justified in themselves : more to be desired than gold and many precious stones ; and sweeter than honey and the honey-comb. For thy servant keepeth them, and in keeping them there is a great reward.* What encumbrances are here heaped one upon another, of the law and commandments of God, under different denominations, and of the excellent fruits that grow from the observance of them ! 1. The law of God is beautiful and pure, *without spot, or blemish* : and it has a wonderful efficacy to *turn the soul from sin to God*. 2. It is *faithful* in what it proposes and promises ; and imparts the truest of all *wisdom, to little ones*, that is to the humble, who willingly submit their necks to its sweet yoke. 3. It is *right* in every tittle, agreeable to the sovereign reason, and carries with it *joy to the hearts* that embrace it. 4. It is full of *spiritual light, to enlighten* the inward eyes of the soul with divine truths. 5. It is most *holy* in itself, and comes from the fountain of all *holiness*, and makes all them *holy* that observe it, and endures with them *for ever and ever*. 6. It is *true and just*, as being given by the Eternal Truth and Justice, and *justifies* itself by its own evidence. 7. It is more *amiable and desirable* than all the treasures of the universe ; and more *sweet and delightful* than anything this world can afford, by reason of the spiritual riches of virtue, grace, and merit, and the manifold consolations and inward pleasures the observance of it brings to the soul : besides the *reward* hereafter, which is incomprehensible and eternal.

Consider 3dly, that the observance of the commandments of God, is not only essentially necessary to salvation, and every way admirable in the fruits it produces, both for this world and the next ; but is indeed very sweet, and easy to men of good will. Our Lord assures us, (St. Matt. xi. 30.) that his *yoke is sweet, and his burthen light* : and that instead of oppressing us with its weight, it brings refresh-

ment and *rest to our soul*. And St. John, (1 *John* v. 3.) tells us, that this is indeed the charity, or love of God, that we keep his commandments, and that *his commandments are not heavy*. Love makes all things easy, that are done for the sake of the beloved : and therefore the true lover of God finds no labour in the keeping his commandments : the grace of God makes them all sweet and agreeable to him. O teach us, dear Lord, to love thee, and command what thou pleasest : thy grace will make all things easy and pleasant, that are to be done, or suffered, for the love of thee.

Conclude to seek thy happiness, both for time and eternity, in the observance of the law and commandments of God. Nothing else can ever make thee happy. Give ear to the apostle, (*Rom.* ii. 9, 10.) *Tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that worketh evil . . . but glory, and honour, and peace to every one that worketh good.*

*On St. Matthew.*

Sept. 21. **C**ONSIDER first, the wonders of divine grace, in the call and conversion of St. Matthew ; changed on a sudden from a worldling, a publican, and a sinner, to be an individual companion and disciple of Christ ; and not long after advanced to be an apostle, a pillar in Christ's Church ; a preacher powerful in word and work ; a worker of wonderful miracles, a father and converter of nations ; an evangelist, or writer of the gospel ; and in a word, a most eminent saint. O ! glorify God, who has wrought all these wonders to manifest to all generations his infinite power, mercy, and goodness : and learn from this example, never to despair of the conversion of any one, how remote soever he may seem to be at present from following Christ. The arm of God is not shortened : his power, mercy, and goodness, is as infinite now as ever : he is equally both able, and willing, to call poor sinners, and to convert them to himself. But alas ! our

misfortune is, we are not so ready, as Matthew was, to attend to his heavenly calls, and to correspond with his inspirations and graces; we prefer the sitting still in the custom-house of the world, entangled in many vain and sinful affections, and empty earthly toys, before the rising up, without delay, to follow Christ, who calls us to him. O how pernicious are all those affections, which keep us from Christ!

Consider 2dly, the lessons St. Matthew gives us in his conversion. 1. By his immediately rising up at the first call, to correspond, with his whole heart, with the grace of God. How often have we been called to be disciples of Christ? And have we ever yet followed the call in good earnest? This *Follow thou me*, with which our Lord called Matthew, is indeed addressed by him to all Christians; in as much as we are all called to be his followers: for the very name of *Christians* implies as much as followers of Christ: and yet how few are there of those that call themselves Christians, who truly follow in their lives, either the doctrine or the example of Christ? Our Lord was *passing* by when he called Matthew, and very probably, had that call been neglected, he might not have favoured him with the like grace another time. What obligations then have we to his bounty and mercy, for his repeated calls to us! But what have we not to apprehend, if we continue to abuse his graces, by refusing to correspond with his calls! 2. St. Matthew *left all* to follow Christ; quitting his worldly business, upon which his livelihood depended, and whatsoever else he seemed to possess in this world: Christ does not call us, to quit the business of our lawful callings, nor to give up at once all our worldly goods; but he insists upon our taking off our hearts from all these things, and our parting with every affection that would keep us from him. He expects we should *follow him*,



not so much by our bodily steps, as by giving him the chief place in our affections, which are, as it were, the feet of the soul.

Consider 3dly, that St. Matthew, immediately upon his conversion, made a *feast* for our Saviour in his house; at which many publicans and sinners were present, who also followed our Lord, *St. Mark ii. 15.* See the force of good example; and how one perfect conversion draws many others after it. This conversion of souls was a more agreeable feast to the divine charity of our Redeemer, than any other entertainment St. Matthew could make for him. Christians, reflect that the Son of God expects also to feast himself with you, and to be entertained by you. *Behold, says he, (Apocalypse iii. 20.) I stand at the gate and knock, if any man shall hear my voice, and open to me the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.* We entertain Christ, by inviting him into our inward house, and keeping ourselves at home with him by recollection and mental prayer: we *feast* him, by giving him our hearts, by love, by frequent and fervent oblations of all the powers of our soul, and of our whole being to him: and he feasts us in return, by giving himself to us. O happy feast indeed, which is in some measure a foretaste of the eternal banquet of heaven!

Conclude to imitate St. Matthew, by a ready compliance with all the divine calls and inspirations; and by not suffering thyself to be kept from following Christ with thy whole soul, either by the custom-house of the world, or by any of its painted toys and cobwebs. Let thy example serve to draw others to him: and let the door of thy inward house be ever opened to him, to entertain him; but kept close shut to all his enemies, thy vicious and irregular affections.

*On the Worship of God enjoined by the first Commandment.*

Sept. 22. **C**ONSIDER first, that preface to the ten commandments, delivered *Exodus xx. 2.* *I am the Lord thy God, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.* And learn from thence who it is that enjoins these commandments; by what authority, and what urgent motives we have to oblige us to obey his laws. It is the Lord himself who is our law-giver, the eternal, immense, infinite Deity, the great Creator of heaven and earth, who made us and all things; our God, our first beginning and our last end: and who shall dare refuse his commandments, or question his authority, or any of the manifold titles he has to our obedience? In these words he particularly inculcated the obligation the people of Israel had to keep his commandments; because he had delivered them out of the bondage of Egypt: how much more pressing motives have we Christians to oblige us to a strict observance of all his divine laws: because we have been redeemed by him from a slavery infinitely worse than that of Egypt, viz. the slavery of Satan, sin, and hell; and that by the precious blood of his only Son?

Consider 2dly, that these words, *I am the Lord thy God*, though not expressed in the form of a command, insinuate nevertheless the whole duty of man, with regard to his God: by which he is bound to worship him, 1st, by *faith*, which bows down and adores God's truth; *brings into captivity every understanding to the obedience of Christ*, (2 Cor. x. 5.) and casts down every proud thought or imagination that raiseth itself up against his divine word: 2dly, by *hope*, which worships the almighty power, the infinite goodness, and mercy of God, through Jesus Christ, and the veracity of all his divine promises, by a firm and constant reliance upon him, by building entirely on this rock, and fastening the anchor

of the soul in him: 3dly, by divine charity, which offers to God the sacrifice of our heart, which he chiefly calls for, by loving him in all things, and above all things: 4thly, by the virtue of *religion*, which considering God as our first beginning, and our last end, daily worships him *in spirit and truth*; by adoration, praise, and thanksgiving; by an oblation of ourselves to his holy will, and of all things else to his glory; by joining in the offering of the great sacrifice of the death and passion of his Son; and by frequent and fervent prayer. See, my soul, thou never neglect any part of this Christian worship, which thy God expects at thy hands.

Consider 3dly, that by this commandment: *Thou shalt not have strange gods before me*: we are not only called upon to turn away from all false gods to the true and living God; and to renounce all that kind of ungodliness which may any way corrupt his worship with superstition or error; but also to make it the great business of our life to be truly *godly*, by a serious application of our whole souls to the love and service of our Maker. For what will it avail us to *know God*, if we do not *glorify him as God*, nor serve him? Will not this be *detaining the truth of God in injustice*? Rom. i. 6. The great end of our creation was to *glorify God*, and to dedicate our whole lives to his service: we have, properly speaking, no other business upon earth: if we discharge ourselves well of this great duty, we are truly *godly*; and fulfil the first commandment. But, alas! how many thousands are there that call themselves Christians, who live and die in a notorious breach of this great commandment, by neglecting and forgetting their God, and giving to every thing else the preference before him and his service!

Conclude to have always before thy eyes the worship thou owest to thy God, by this first commandment; and in consequence of it, to consecrate the days of thy pilgrimage to his divine love and service. This is the whole duty of man.

*On the Prohibition of Idol-Worship.*

Sept. 23. **C**ONSIDER first, that the making or worshipping of any *idol*, is also forbidden by the divine commandments: by which name is understood any image, or other thing, that is set up to be served or honoured as God, or with any part of divine honour. Because our God is a *jealous God*, and will not allow his honour to be given to any other. As to that kind of idolatry which consists in the serving of stocks and stones, there is no great danger of Christians incurring any such guilt as this: because, as it was long ago foretold by the prophets, (*Isai. ii. 18, &c.*) that kind of idol worship has for many ages been abolished, in all nations where Christianity has been preached, by the apostles, and their successors, the pastors and teachers of the Catholic church. The *idols* that are more to be apprehended in these our days, are of another kind: viz. those of wicked imaginations, errors and heresies; framed not by the hands, but by the head, of proud, self-conceited men; deluding themselves, and seeking to delude as many others as they can, with the inventions of their own brain, or the suggestions of Satan, which they set up and worship for divine truths, and father upon the word of God, in spite of the church of God, and its authority, so strongly established, and recommended by that divine word. Ah! Christians, beware of ever *making to yourselves, or bowing down yourselves* to any such *idols* as these: but let the truth of God, proposed to you by the church of God, be ever the object and rule of your faith and worship.

Consider 2dly, the danger of another kind of *idols*, formed not by the brain, but by the disorderly affections of the heart; which too many, who call themselves Christians, daily prefer before the living God, and set up in opposition to him, in his very sanctuary, that is in the temple of their own souls, which at their baptism was consecrated to God. It is the

case of all the proud and ambitious, who make an idol of their worldly honour: it is the case of all the worshippers of Mammon, the great God of worldlings; and of all the *lovers of pleasure more than of God*. All these, in the language of St. Paul, are *idolaters*: because they all *worship and serve the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed for ever*, Rom. i. 25. And thou, my soul, hast thou no share in this kind of idolatry? Are there no idols of this sort set up in thy inward house, to confront the living God? Is there no predominant passion or affection there, which takes place of God, by drawing thee to offend him? Alas! how often have the very meanest of worldly toys and vanities been preferred by thee before him! And as to that great idol *self*, the continual object of the worship of *self-love*, and *self-will*, art thou not daily sacrificing thy God, and all things else to this insatiable monster? It is well if thou art not.

Consider 3dly, that not only direct *idolatry*, but also all *superstition* is forbidden by the first commandment. Of this crime, all those, in the first place, are highly guilty, who seek any knowledge or cure, help or assistance, from the enemy of God and man; by making use of any such instruments, or means, as can have no effect of their own nature, or any otherwise than by his interposition. For in all these cases there is a correspondence kept up, and a secret compact made with Satan, or his agents; and consequently a high treason committed against the Divine Majesty. 2dly, The guilt of *superstition* is likewise incurred by the observance of lucky and unlucky days, omens, dreams, &c. for all these are relics of paganism, and serve for nothing but to delude the soul and lay her open to Satan; to take off her dependance from her God, and his divine providence; and to transfer her faith to lying vanities and inventions of the devil. 3dly, The guilt of *superstition* is also incurred by corrupting the truth of God's worship; by placing religion in certain

empty things, that have no tendency to his divine service, or to his greater glory; or by flattering one's self or others with an assurance of obtaining miraculous favours, or salvation, by the use, or practice of any such things, without any manner of warrant, either of the word of God, or of the church of God. O beware, my soul, of any such errors!

Conclude to renounce in practice every branch of *idol worship* and *superstition*. Cast out of the house of God which is within thee, every idol, of the head and of the heart: and let the Lord Jesus reign, without any rival, in all the powers of thy soul. Have nothing to do with his enemy, nor with any of his inventions; nor suffer his worship to be vitiated with any mixture of falsehood and lies.

*On honouring God's holy Name.*

Sept. 24. **C**ONSIDER first, those words of the divine commandment, (*Ex. xx. 7.*) *Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain: for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that shall take his name in vain.* This commandment obliges us to shew all respect to the holy name of the Lord our God; and not to profane it by the heinous crime of *blasphemy*, (which flies in the face of God's infinite majesty) or of *perjury* (which insults his truth, and makes him witness to a lie). O let not such dreadful evils as these be ever found in the inheritance of Christ, or amongst the professors of the Christian name! It would be wonderful if any nation were suffered to continue upon earth that should encourage, or even tolerate such monstrous guilt. Moreover, this commandment forbids also all profane swearing and cursing, and all other irreverent use of the sacred name of God. Ah! how common is this guilt amongst Christians! and how dismal are the consequences of it in the manifold judgments of God inflicted in punishment of these sins, both in this world and the next! O true it is: *The Lord will not hold him guiltless, that shall take the name of the Lord his*

*God in vain.* Hence the wise man tells us, (*Ecclus. xxiii. 12.*) *A man that sweareth much shall be filled with iniquity, and a scourge shall not depart from his house.*

Consider 2dly, the different ways by which unhappy mortals daily violate and profane God's most sacred name. How they swear by it, at every turn; often falsely, often unjustly, generally rashly; and thereby continually expose themselves to the evident danger of that most enormous sin, of calling in their God to be witness to their lies. Ah! how often do they, with equal rashness and profaneness, by their curses and imprecations, presume to cite his divine majesty; to serve them in quality of executioner; to execute the damnation which every humour or passion of theirs pronounces against some or other of his creatures! How often in their madness do they pronounce the like sentence, and call for the like vengeance, even upon their own souls? How often is the sacred name of *God* brought in, even by the better sort, without rime or reason, to express every passion or emotion of their souls? Alas! what liberty is here taken, by these worms of the earth, with the tremendous majesty of the God of heaven! And shall all this pass unpunished? Oh! to what a low ebb is Christianity come, when so many thousands of those that call themselves Christians, are more guilty by far of profaning the holy name of God, than either Turks or Pagans; and even glory in their guilt! And thou, my soul, hast thou never gone into their council; or has thy glory never been in their assembly? O, see thou detest all such wickedness; and reclaim as many as thou canst from these ways of death. And if at any time thou hearest God's holy name thus prophaned, lift up thy heart to heaven, and join with all the quires of blessed spirits there, in adoration, praise, and love of his divine majesty; to make what amends thou canst for all these outrages offered to the king of heaven.

Consider 3dly, that the great business of a Christian is to glorify the name of God, both by his tongue and by his life. We glorify his holy name by the tongue, when we ever praise him and extol his mercies; when our words and conversation are always directed to promote God's glory, and the edification of our neighbours. We glorify his holy name by our lives, when we live as becomes his children and his people: when our light so shines before men, that they take occasion from hence to glorify our Father who is in heaven. For, as it is written concerning wicked livers, that *through them the name of God is blasphemed* amongst the nations: so the lives of God's true servants are *the sweet odour of Christ in every place*, and not only give continual glory to God themselves, by the exercise of all virtues; but also bring many others to glorify him, by the efficacy of their example.

Conclude to keep a great guard upon thyself, that for the future thou mayest never use the holy name of God but with respect and devotion. And as for whatsoever profanation thou hast hitherto been guilty of, repair that guilt, to the best of thy power, with penitential tears, and by dedicating the whole remainder of thy life to procure the greater glory of God's name.

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On keeping holy the Lord's Day.

Sept. 25. **C**ONSIDER first, that divine precept: *Remember thou keep holy the sabbath-day: (Exod. xx. 8)*: and reflect how just it is, that next to the capital duties of acknowledging one only true and living God, and paying due respect to his name; we should also set aside one day at least in the week, to be sanctified to him, and to be spent in his divine worship. The particular appointment of the seventh day as the day of God's rest, and the *figure* of our eternal rest, after the six days labours of this transitory life, was but a part of the *ceremonial law*, which is no longer obligatory under the new cove-



nant of Jesus Christ : and therefore the day has been changed into the first day of the week, to honour the Resurrection of the Son of God, by which he put, as it were, the finishing stroke to the great work of our redemption; and the glorious promulgation of his law, by the coming down of the Holy Ghost. But the precept itself, as to its substance, and as to the obligation of dedicating, in a more particular manner, a competent portion of our days to the worship of him, who in all reason might justly claim them all, is unchangeable, indispensable, and eternal: and is here enforced with that word, *Remember*, not found in any of the other commandments, to inculcate the utmost importance of our strict observance of it. O, it is true, that the religious keeping of these days agreeably to the ordinance of God and his church, is the sovereign means to bring Christians, after their short labours here, to their true and everlasting sabbath.

Consider 2dly, that on these days (which we are commanded to keep holy) all *servile works*, and profane employments are forbidden to Christians; lest their attention should be taken off from the worship of God; or their application to religious duties interrupted by their worldly occupations. But then if these kinds of *works*, which are otherwise commendable in themselves, and even obligatory at other times, are strictly forbid on these days, as hindrances of God's worship: how much more are all such criminal diversions as are lawful at no time; and all those *works* of darkness and sin, which are *servile* in the very worst of senses; because by them men *serve* the devil, and are far more taken off by them from their application to God, than by any other labours whatsoever? But oh! how common are these sinful profanations of the Lord's day! How many seem to have no other intention in resting on this day from their usual employments, than to dedicate this holy time to vanity, sloth, luxury, or some other criminal passion, without giving any part of it to

God? See, my soul, this be never thy practice: but if thou givest the other days of the week to the world, to the business of thy calling, to working for thy temporal livelihood, give God *his day*, to be employed in his service, in the business of eternity, and in working for thy eternal salvation.

Consider 3dly, that all Christians are obliged on these days to attend to the public worship of God, in his church; and in particular to assist at the divine sacrifice, in which we solemnly celebrate the death and passion of the Son of God. Here we are to join with *him*, and with his whole family, in paying adoration, praise, and thanksgiving, to the Divine Majesty. Here we are to bewail our sins in his sight, and crave mercy for them, through Christ's precious blood, here offered to God. Here we are to present through him our prayers and supplications, both for ourselves and for the whole world, before *the throne of grace*. We are also on these days to dispose our souls to receive, either sacramentally, or at least spiritually, the body and blood of Christ; to attend to the word of God; to read devout books; to meditate on divine truths; and to employ a good part of our time in these spiritual exercises. Alas! how very little are these important duties thought on by too many Christians! How many will neither sanctify these days in a proper manner themselves, nor suffer their servants, or others that are about them, to sanctify them? And what a strict account shall they give for all these abuses another day!

Conclude to make it thy business, that thou at least, and thy house, may give to God what belongs to God, by duly serving him on his own day. This diligence shall entitle thee and thine to his blessing; and thy sanctifying his day shall be a powerful means to sanctify thee.

*Honour thy Father and thy Mother, &c.*

Sept. 26. **C**ONSIDER first, that next to the precepts that enforce these most essential duties which we owe to God himself, follows the commandment of *honouring* our parents, as well corporal as spiritual, under God, and all such as have from God a power over us, whether in church or state. This, says the apostle, (*Eph. vi. 2.*) *is the first commandment with a promise: that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest be long-lived upon earth.* Nothing could be more agreeable to nature, to reason, and to religion, than this divine precept: and we find, by many instances, how much God takes to heart our strict observance of it; and how severely he punishes, even in this life, the transgressors; as well by ordering in the law such as are notoriously guilty in this kind to be put to death without mercy, as by the many dreadful judgments he often inflicts upon them. Christians, what is your comportment to your parents, &c.? Is it dutiful, or undutiful? O never flatter yourselves with the expectation of God's blessing, either in this world or the next, if you are undutiful.

Consider 2dly, what this *honour* means which the law of God requires from children to their parents. For it does not merely consist in cringing and ceremony; but it implies a sincere love, joined with respect and reverence; a ready obedience to their orders, where they no ways clash with the holy will and law of God; and a perpetual disposition to afford them, or procure for them, all proper assistances, as well in their corporal, as in their spiritual necessities: insomuch that our Lord will not allow of any *gifts* made to himself, or to his temple, to the prejudice of that honour and support which we owe to our parents. *Matt. xv. 3, 4, 5, 6.* Christians, give ear to the admonitions of the Holy Ghost by the wise man, (*Ecclus. iii.*) and learn from him what your duty is to

your parents, and what the reward of your compliance with that duty. *Honour thy father in word and work, and in all patience, that a blessing may come upon thee from him, and his blessing may remain in the latter end. The father's blessing establisheth the houses of the children, but the mother's curse rooteth up the foundation. Son, support the old age of thy father, and grieve him not in his life; and if his understanding fail, have patience with him, and despise him not when thou art in thy strength . . . and in justice thou shalt be built up, and in the day of affliction thou shalt be remembered; and thy sins shall melt away as the ice in the fair warm weather. And again: He that honoureth his father shall have joy in his own children; and in the day of his prayer he shall be heard. He that honoureth his father shall enjoy a long life, &c. He that feareth the Lord honoureth his parents, and will serve them, as his masters, that brought him into the world.*

Consider 3dly, what the duty is, on the other hand, of parents with regard to their children; and so in proportion of other superiors with regard to them that are committed to their charge. For their obligation is greater than many apprehend; and their own eternal welfare, as well as that of their children, or subjects, absolutely depends upon their discharge of it. It is true, they are not to neglect the care of their temporal well being, as far as is consistent with the safety of their souls; but they must take much more to heart their everlasting salvation: and therefore, from their very childhood, they must give them an early knowledge of their Christian duty, and instil into their tender minds the fear and love of God: they must accustom them to prayer, and must teach them how to pray: they must make them sensible of the necessity of their breaking their own will, of their curbing their passions, and denying themselves, if they would be happy either here or hereafter. In a word, they must remove far from them all the occasions of sin; and procure them all the helps they can

to establish them in Christian piety. O how easy it would be for parents to bring up Saints for heaven, if they would be diligent in putting all this in practice! But, alas! how many rather train up their children for hell, by abandoning them from their childhood to their own corrupt inclinations; and inspiring them with the maxims of the world, the flesh, and the devil?

Conclude to discharge thyself diligently of thy respective duty, whether of a child, or of a parent, of a subject, or of a superior, according to the station in which God has placed thee. Pass not over this matter too slightly in the examination of thy conscience, as too many do, who flatter themselves with a false security, whilst they live and die in the neglect of these great relative duties.

*Thou shalt not kill.*

Sept. 27. **C**ONSIDER first, that this commandment does not only forbid all wilful murder, unjust shedding of blood, beating, or doing any thing else that may hasten one's own, or any other person's death; but also all thoughts that have any tendency that way, all wishes or desires of the death of any one, whether through malice or envy, or for some temporal conveniency or interest; as also all manner of hatred and rancour of heart to any one living. For it is written, (1 John iii. 15.) *Who-soever hateth his brother is a murderer; and you know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.* Christians, look well to yourselves, and carefully examine into the true state of your interior in this respect. You have perhaps hitherto flattered yourselves that you had nothing to reproach your conscience with, on the score of the horrible sin of murder: but have you never wilfully entertained any hatred, envy, or malice to your neighbours? If you have, know that all this is like murder in the eyes of God. O take heed of living in any such malicious dispositions to any one person upon

earth; lest you should be excluded thereby from any share in *eternal life*, to which murderers have no title.

Consider 2dly, how the Son of God himself has explained to us the extent of the obligation of this commandment, (*Matt. v. 21, &c.*) *You have heard, saith he, that it was said to them of old: Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment. But I say to you, that whosoever is angry with his brother shall be in danger of the judgment. And whosoever shall say to his brother Raca (a word expressing indignation or contempt) shall be in danger of the council; (a higher and more severe tribunal) and whosoever shall say, thou fool, shall be in danger of hell-fire.* By which our Lord would have all Christians to understand, that this divine law was not only designed to restrain the hand from killing; but also the heart from wilfully entertaining the passion of anger, or the desires of revenge: and much more from suffering our wrath to break out into words of indignation or contempt; much less into downright affronts or injuries, which might either rob our neighbour of his honour, or of the peace of his mind, or, as it too commonly happens, of the grace of God, by provoking him also to passion and sin.

Consider 3dly, how the Holy Ghost also declares himself in like manner against this murdering crime of passion and revenge, (*Ecclus. xxviii.*) *He that seeketh to revenge himself, saith he, shall find vengeance from the Lord, and he will surely keep his sins in remembrance . . . One man keepeth anger against another; and doth he seek to be healed by God? He hath no mercy on a man like himself; and doth he intreat for his own sins? He that is but flesh nourisheth anger; and with what face doth he ask forgiveness of God? Who shall obtain pardon for his sins? . . . Forgive thy neighbour if he have hurt thee, and then shall thy sins be forgiven to thee when thou prayest. . . Remember thy lust things, and let enmity cease . . .*

*Remember the fear of God, and be not angry with thy neighbour. Remember the covenant of the Most High, and overlook the ignorance of thy neighbour. Refrain from strife, and thou shalt diminish thy sins, &c.* O let us imprint these divine lessons deep in our souls, and we shall fulfil this great commandment.

Conclude, if thou desirest to keep thyself far from the guilt of murder, to banish far from thy soul every thought that has any tendency to malice or revenge. O learn from the doctrine and practice of thy Saviour, rather to suffer in thy person, in thy honour, or in thy worldly goods, than, by seeking revenge, to endanger the loss of thy soul, by losing thy God, and his grace.

*On spiritual Murder.*

Sept. 28. **C**ONSIDER first, that there is another kind of *murder* besides that which destroys the body, *viz.* the murdering of the soul, by bringing upon it the death of sin. A crime most heinous in the eyes of God, and most pernicious to the souls of men; and yet most common amongst Christians. Of this kind of *murder* the devil was the first author; by *whose envy death came into the world*: (*Wisd.* ii. 24.) and *who was a murderer from the beginning*, (*John* viii. 44.) by drawing man into deadly sin. And all they follow him, and are *on his side*, and even take him for *their father*, who seek to fulfil *his desires*, by involving their neighbours in the guilt of sin, which *when completed begetteth death*, *James* i. 15. Ah! how common are these kinds of *murders*! and how many ways are they daily committed? by alluring or enticing others to evil; by word or work; dress or carriage; or by provoking them to it; or by teaching them the evil they knew not before; or by engaging them in dangerous diversions and conversations; or, which is the most common of all, by authorizing sin, and encouraging and inviting men to the committing of it, by bad example.

And what is all this but murdering as many souls as there are persons to whom one has voluntarily given occasion of mortal sin.

Consider 2dly, how grievous a crime this *murdering* of souls must be in the sight of God; since it defeats, as much as lies in man, the great business for which God sent his own Son upon earth, *viz.* the salvation of souls, which he takes so much to heart. It daringly promotes the interest of Satan, that arch rebel, and sets up his standard against that of Christ: it encourages deluded mortals to follow that enemy of God and man, rather than their Creator and Redeemer: it debauches as many of God's subjects from their allegiance, as it draws souls into sin: it even treads under foot the precious blood of Christ, and makes void his passion and death, by causing those souls to perish eternally for whom Christ died. What a complication is here of high treasons against the divine Majesty! How manifold, and how enormous a guilt! And what can such traitors and murderers as these expect from God, but the most dreadful of all judgments, if they do not prevent them, by a speedy and serious conversion, and by endeavouring to make the best reparation they are able; especially by reclaiming as many souls as they can from Satan and sin, and reconciling them to God.

Consider 3dly, the grievousness of this evil of *spiritual murder*, from another head; that is, from the mischief it does to man, and the dismal consequences it brings after it, both for time and eternity. The *murder* of the body is certainly a most heinous sin, and one of the greatest that can be committed between man and man: it even *cries to heaven for vengeance*. But then it only reaches the body, which is the meaner part of man, and which by its condition must otherwise speedily perish: it does not touch the immortal soul: it does not extend to eternity. But *spiritual murder* kills the soul, by robbing it of the grace of God, which is its true life: it separates



the soul from God, and condemns it to an eternal separation from him: it brings upon it a second and everlasting death: it plunges both soul and body into the flames of hell. O how loudly then must the blood of so many unhappy souls, which are daily sent to hell by these *spiritual murders*, cry to heaven for vengeance against their murderers!

Conclude to look well to thyself that thou never have any share in this enormous guilt of *spiritual* murder, by giving occasion to any other's sin: for why shouldst thou thus declare war against heaven; thrust thy neighbours' souls into hell; and bring upon thy own head a multiplied damnation; even as many hells as thou hast drawn souls into sin?

*On Michaelmas Day.*

Sept. 29. **C**ONSIDER first, that on this day, the church of God celebrates the festival of St. Michael, and of all the heavenly host of Angels and Archangels, Cherubims and Seraphims, and the rest of the orders of blessed spirits: wherefore the devotion of this day is: 1st, To join with all these heavenly quires in giving glory, praise, and thanksgiving to God, who created these angelic spirits to glorify him; and who has inspired them with all unspeakable love for us; and has sent them to minister for us, in order to our *receiving the inheritance of salvation*, Heb. i. 14. 2dly, We ought on this day to congratulate with these heavenly citizens, and their great leader St. Michael, these friends of God, and of ours; and to rejoice in their eternal happiness. 3dly, We ought to associate ourselves with them, in order jointly to promote the common cause of our common master; that is, the greater glory of God, and the advancement of his divine service and love; and with them to fight his battles against the devil and his rebel angels. O, Christians, how happy, how glorious is this cause in which

both we and they are engaged! And how advantageous is it for us to have such auxiliaries in this great warfare!

Consider 2dly, what lessons we have to learn from the behaviour of these blessed spirits, from the first moment of their creation; and what we are to imitate in them. They no sooner received their being, but they turned to their Creator by adoration and love; and dedicated themselves eternally to him. We were made for the same end as they were; that is, to glorify God; and, like them, were strictly obliged to turn to our Creator, as soon as we were capable of knowing him; and to dedicate our whole being to his love and service. But have we done so? Have we not rather, like Lucifer, and his associates, turned away from God, at our first coming to the use of reason, and preferred every empty toy before him? The good Angels are perpetually attentive to God, wheresoever they are, or whatever they are about; their eye and their heart is always upon him; they are perpetually jealous of his honour, and ever labouring to procure, not their own glory, but the glory of their great king. Do we imitate them? Is the eye of our soul turned towards God in all our employments? Are we always seeking his greater glory? If so, like the Angels, wheresoever we are, and whatsoever we are doing, we shall in some measure have heaven with us, even here upon earth.

Consider 3dly, from the gospel of this day, (St. Matt. xviii.) what kind of exercises of virtue are to bring us effectually to the eternal society of the Angels. We must be *converted* from the corruption of pride, which cast the devil out of heaven, and become as little children, by innocence and humility, or we shall have no share with the good Angels in the kingdom of heaven. There is no room for *pride* in that blessed society: the devil is the *king over all the children of pride*, Job xli. 25. There is no room there for any that wilfully associate themselves with the rebels (that have been cast out from thence); by

corrupting others, or suffering themselves to be corrupted and drawn away from their allegiance; by giving or taking *scandal* against their own souls. The true way to arrive at the happy company of the Angels is humility, innocence, and purity. If we would come amongst them, we must *cleanse ourselves from all defilements of the flesh, and of the spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God*, 2 Cor. vii. 1. For *nothing that is defiled shall enter into that blessed city, where they dwell for ever*, Rev. xxi. 27.

Conclude so to honour St. Michael, and all the good Angels, as to imitate their fidelity to their God; their constant attention to promote his glory; and their constant opposition to all the enterprises of his enemy. The name of *Michael* signifies *who is like God?* Let this be your motto in all your spiritual warfare: at all times stick close to God, and he will stick close to you: prefer his honour before all other considerations; and he will *speedily crush Satan under your feet*: yea, he will enable you to *walk upon the asp and upon the basilisk, and to tread upon the lion and the dragon*, (Ps. xc.) and nothing shall have power to hurt you.

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*Thou shalt not commit Adultery.*

Sept. 30. **C**ONSIDER first, that by this commandment is forbidden in the first place the heinous crime of *adultery*: as not only directly contrary to chastity, but to justice also, in the highest degree; as carrying with it one of the greatest injuries that can be done to one's neighbour, and violating an indefeasible right, confirmed to him by the law of God and of nature; and withal profaning the sanctity of the matrimonial contract, and breaking through the soleinn vows of mutual fidelity annexed to it. But though *adultery* be the only crime here-named, it not being necessary to reckon up in particular all the shameful sins of lust, yet it is not the only evil forbidden by this commandment; which moreover

condemns and prohibits all manner of uncleannesses, whether committed by, or with, married persons or single; and much more all other unnatural sins of lust, committed upon one's self, or with any other; as also all abuses of the marriage bed, by any liberties contrary to the sanctity of it, or disagreeable to the end of the holy institution. O how odious are all these impurities in the sight of God and his holy angels, before whose eyes they are committed! What dreadful judgments have they often drawn down from heaven! what black and filthy flames are prepared for the punishment of them in hell! O my soul, let us ever fly and abhor all these abominations!

Consider 2dly, that by this commandment (as explained by our Lord himself, *St. Matt. v. 27, 28, &c.*) are not only forbidden all those grosser sins of uncleanness, but all other kinds of immodesties, which have any manner of tendency towards these greater crimes, even to every wanton glance of the eye, and every impure inclination of the heart. *You have heard*, saith our Lord, *that it was said to them of old, thou shalt not commit adultery: but I say to you, that whosoever looketh at a woman to lust after her, hath already committed adultery with her in his heart.* If then we would be truly chaste, as the divine law commands us, we must, with holy Job, put a restraint both upon our eyes, and upon our thoughts and imaginations, lest death enter into our souls by those windows. *I made a covenant*, saith he, *with my eyes, that I would not so much as think upon a virgin*, (*Job xxxi. 4.*) lest, as he adds, *God above should have no part in him.* How much more does this commandment forbid all loose discourse, unchaste words and songs: which not only demonstrate a corrupted heart in them that take delight in talking of such matters, which St. Paul would not have so much as once named amongst Christians, *Eph. v. 3.* (*for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh*, *Matt. xii. 34.*) but also spread the infection amongst their neighbours, to

corrupt them also, by filling their minds and hearts with foul imaginations and impure affections? O how common, and how dreadful is this evil! and how many souls owe their damnation to it! Ah! it is too true, that *evil communications corrupt good manners*; and that thousands of Christians lose their innocence, and are made a sacrifice to Satan, by means of such lewd discourses and corrupt conversations.

Consider 3dly, that if this commandment is designed to lay a restraint upon our eyes, upon our thoughts and imaginations, upon our wishes and desires, and upon our words and conversations; how much more upon our actions; by condemning and prohibiting all carnal liberties, all wanton play, all indecent touches, all immodest embraces, &c. all which violently tend to defile both soul and body with lust? O Christians, deceive not yourselves: all these liberties are criminal, and such as are loudly condemned in the word of God, (*Gal. v. 19.* and *Eph. v. 3, 4.*) as absolutely excluding all that are guilty of them from any inheritance in the kingdom of God.

Conclude, if you desire to have any share in Christ, and in his eternal inheritance, to keep your souls and bodies pure from the defilements of lust. In order thereunto, be exact in observing the rule our Lord has given you, (*Matt. v. 29, 30.*) viz. of retrenching all occasions that may expose you to the danger of lust, however agreeable, or dear they may be to your natural inclinations, or however necessary they may seem to you. For what can be more dear or necessary than a hand or an eye? And yet we must part with these, rather than lose our souls. Apply this rule to all such company or conversation, to all such books or entertainments, to all such plays or diversions, to all such shows or comedies, as are apt to fill your mind with impure thoughts, or otherwise to endanger your chastity; and let neither the example, nor the invitations and persuasions, nor

the authority of any one living, prevail on you to transgress this divine rule, or to fling yourself into the jaws of this infernal dragon of lust; which in all such places and occasions, lies in wait to devour your souls.

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*Thou shalt not steal.*

Oct. 1. **C**ONSIDER first, that by this commandment, God forbids all manner of wrong to our neighbour, in his goods, rights, or worldly possessions; whether by open violence, or by fraud; by stealing, or by overreaching; by cheating in buying, or in selling, or in any other bargain; by keeping from him what is his, or not giving him his dues; or not paying just debts; or by any extortion whatsoever; or any usury in the loan of money, or other things; or by putting him to any unjust charges; or by spoiling or damaging what belongs to him. In all these cases there is an injustice committed, which is not only condemned by this divine precept, but by the natural, and eternal law, written from the beginning in the heart of man; and by that great principle of morality, which forbids us to do by any other, what we would not have done to us. And yet how many ways are poor mortals daily guilty of breaking through this divine and eternal law, for the sake of this wretched *mammon* of worldly interest, the great *God of this world*; and that in spite both of law and gospel, honour and honesty, conscience, and religion? And how often do they affect to deceive themselves herein with vain pleas and pretexts, invented on purpose to cloak their guilt, and to hide it, if possible, not only from others, but also from their own consciences; that so they may go on without disturbance in *the way that leads to death*, by persuading themselves that all is right. But God is not to be deceived, who has declared that *the unjust shall never possess his kingdom*, 1 Cor. vi. 9. O! examine yourselves, Christians, impartially, upon this head of justice in your deal-

ings with your neighbours: for there is nothing more easy than for you to deceive yourselves herein; the consequences of which would be most dreadful to your souls.

Consider 2dly, that every breach of this commandment, by any one of these ways of wronging one's neighbour, is always followed by the strict obligation of making restitution, or of repairing, to the full, the loss or damage he has suffered: without which restitution or reparation the crime shall never be forgiven. And how few think of this? Alas! how many of these restitutions will be to be made, when *time shall be no more*; and when that which has been neglected on earth, shall be exacted in hell. Ah! sinners, what a load then have you charged upon your own shoulders, by your injustices? And how is it possible you should think so little of discharging it! O! do not be too easy in persuading yourselves you have it not in your power to make this restitution; you cannot deceive the all-seeing eye, of him, who clearly discerns how much you might do, if you would but retrench all superfluities in your expences; and would truly take to heart this necessary duty of satisfying justice in the first place; and would use all possible industry and labour for that end.

Consider 3dly, that though all injustice in general be hateful in the sight of God, there are some branches of it in particular, which more loudly cry to heaven for vengeance; and more especially such as tend to oppress the poor, by usury, or extortion; or by making a handle of their necessity, to raise to them the price of the things they want, or by defrauding them of their wages, or hire, or otherwise taking, or keeping from them, that which belongs to them. O how heinous are all these sins in the eyes of him, who is *the Father of the poor*? They are like murder in his sight. There is a curse entailed upon all such substance, as is gathered together by oppressing his children. And so there is upon all

sacrilegious rapines, by which the church, or temple of God, or his ministers, are defrauded of what is their due, or by which pious foundations, or donations, are diverted from the uses of religion, to profane uses. In all such cases God looks upon the wrong as done to himself, and will certainly revenge it, both here and hereafter. All that gold, which is brought into the coffers, by robbing, either the poor, or the church, shall not only moulder away itself, but shall consume all the rest it shall find there, together with the master of it.

Conclude to beware of all manner of injustice, and to keep off at the greatest distance possible from it, as a mortal enemy, both to thy temporal and eternal welfare. Take heed lest the love of that idol mammon should at any time impose upon thee in this regard : thou art never secure from danger as long as that idol is not cast out of thy heart. For as the wise man assures us, Eccl. x. 10. *There is not a more wicked thing than to love money : for such a one setteth even his own soul to sale.*

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On our Guardian Angels.

Oct. 2. **C**ONSIDER first, that this day is set aside by the church to glorify God, and to give him thanks, through Jesus Christ his Son, for that inestimable benefit of his divine goodness, by which he has appointed his heavenly spirits to attend on us, and to guard us, during this pilgrimage of our mortality, till they bring us home to himself, and to a happy eternity. Give ear to the word of God on this subject, Ps. xc. *There shall no evil come to thee : nor shall the scourge come near thy dwelling. For he hath given his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways : In their hands they shall bear thee up, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone.* St. Matt. xviii. *Take heed that you despise not one of these little ones : for I say to you, that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father, who is in*

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heaven. Heb. 1. *Are they not all ministering spirits, sent to minister for them, who shall receive the inheritance of salvation? Exodus xxiii. Behold I will send my angel, who shall go before thee, and keep thee in thy journey, and bring thee into the place that I have prepared. Take notice of him, and hear his voice, &c.* Yes, Christians, let us attend to these our heavenly guardians, who are ever inviting us to the love and service of our God, and inspiring us with pious thoughts to this effect; and with their assistance we shall defeat all our enemies, and make our way safely to our eternal country, in spite of all the opposition of hell: according to that of Exod. xxiii. 22. *If thou wilt hear his voice, and do all that I speak, I will be an enemy to thy enemies, and will afflict them that afflict thee: and my angel shall go before thee, and shall bring thee in to the promised land, the figure of the heavenly Canaan.*

Consider 2dly, with St. Bernard, (writing on those words, *He hath given his angels charge over thee*) the wonders of God's bounty and love for us, expressed in this commission given to his angels. 'For who  
' is it that has given this charge? To whom? Of  
' whom? And what is the charge he has given? O  
' let us think well of this grand commission: let us  
' lay it up diligently in our memory. Who has given  
' this charge? Whose angels are they? Whose will  
' do they obey? *He has given his angels charge over  
' thee, to keep thee in all thy ways: nor do they stick,  
' to bear thee up in their hands.* It is then the sove-  
' reign Majesty has given a charge to angels: yea  
' to his own angels he has given a charge: to these  
' sublime spirits, so happy, no nearly adhering to  
' himself, and to his own domestics, he has given a  
' charge of thee. And who art thou? *What is man,  
' that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that  
' thou makest any account of him? As if man were  
' not rottenness, and the son of man a worm.* And  
' what is this commission he has given his angels

‘ concerning thee? Even to be thy guardians. O wonderful condescension! O truly great affection of charity!’

Consider 3dly, with the same Saint, ‘What reverence, what devotion, what confidence, this saying, that *God has given his angels a charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways*, ought to inspire thee with: a reverence for their presence; a devotion for their benevolence; a confidence for their guardianship. Walk cautiously, as having the angels always in thy company; who, according to their commission, are with thee in all thy ways. In every place, in every corner, have respect to thy angel. Never dare to do that in his presence, which thou wouldst not dare to do before me. In God then, my brethren, let us affectionately love his angels, that are to be one day joint heirs with us, but in the mean time are appointed by our Father, and set over us, as tutors and governors. What have we to fear under such guardians as these? They can neither be overcome, nor deceived, who keep us in all our ways; much less can they deceive us. They are faithful, they are wise, they are powerful; what are we afraid of? Let us only follow them, let us stick close to them, and we shall abide under the protection of the God of heaven.’

Conclude to follow in practice these prescriptions of this great Saint: and, as he adds in the same discourse, when at any time we perceive a temptation arising, or we are threatened with any grievous tribulation, let us call upon these our heavenly keepers, our guides, our helpers in due time, in distress, and we shall experience a powerful assistance from them, superior to all the power of earth and hell.

*Thou shalt not bear false Witness against thy Neighbour.*

Oct. 3. **C**ONSIDER first, that by this commandment, is not only forbidden all false testimony given in open court, or before a magistrate, against any one; (which is usually accompanied with another greater crime, viz. that of perjury, or false swearing, if not with that of robbery, or murder also, when the false witness is the occasion of the loss of any one's goods or life) but also all manner of private slanders and lies, and all other ways of injuring one's neighbour by words; either in his character and good name, by backbiting and detraction; or in his honour, by reproaches and affronts; or by taking away the peace of his mind, by scoffs and derision; or by robbing him of his friends, by whispering and tale-bearing; or by promoting misunderstanding and quarrels between him and his neighbours. An evil so odious in the sight of God, that the wise man assures us, (*Prov. vi. 16.*) that *his soul detests it*. All these crimes are condemned by this commandment, and by the eternal and natural law written in the heart of man: all of them are directly opposite both to charity, and to justice, and to that great rule of life, *not to do by others, what we would not have them to do by us*. All of them bring with them a strict obligation, even under pain of eternal damnation (if the injury have been considerable) of making restitution or satisfaction: and yet how seldom is this put in practice? Ah! how common are these injustices of the tongue: and how dreadful are the consequences of them both in time and eternity!

Consider 2dly, more in particular, the heinousness of the sin of detraction, which is so common in the world, and which makes up so great a part of the conversation of the worldlings. And yet at every blow, says St. Francis de Sales, it gives three mortal

wounds : first to the soul of the detracter ; then to the reputation of the person detracted ; and thirdly, to the consciences of the hearers, by drawing as many of them into sin, as are delighted with hearing the detraction ; and much more if they encourage it, and contribute to propagate it, by publishing it to others. The detracter himself is like a thief or a robber, who takes away his neighbour's character, or good name : yea, he is so much worse than a thief or a robber, as a person's character or good name is more valuable to him than his worldly substance ; which also he is in danger to lose, when he loses his character. Now as in matters of theft and robbery it is commonly said, *the receiver is as bad as the thief* ; so in matter of detraction, he that willingly hears the detracter, whilst he is robbing his neighbour of his reputation, is like the *receiver*, and partakes in the guilt of the robbery. And are Christians aware of this ? Do they examine their conscience upon this head ? And yet their souls are here at stake ? O how few detracters, or tale-bearers, would there be, if men were once made sensible, that their unjust or uncharitable discourses were disagreeable to their hearers !

Consider 3dly, that the sin of detraction may be committed, and consequently the obligation of repairing one's neighbour's good name may be incurred, not only by publishing downright slanders and lies against his reputation, but also by charging him upon hearsay, or upon one's own suspicions or rash judgments, with things, if not false, at least doubtful and uncertain ; or by magnifying his guilt, and imputing to malice what might be no more than frailty, or surprise ; or by censuring his intentions, in his good works ; or even by publishing, without necessity, his real crimes or defects, in such circumstances, when his character is thereby grievously hurt. Because in all these cases, one does not only sin against *charity*, which obliges us to love our neighbours as ourselves ; but also against *justice*, by

violating the right our neighbour has, that his good name should be preserved, as long as he has not forfeited it by any public crime. O Christians, do but guide yourselves by that golden rule, *of doing as you would be done by*, and you will avoid all these sins, which send so many souls to hell.

Conclude to examine yourselves well upon the subject of the sins against this commandment, that you may not be imposed upon by the too common practice of them that live and die, with little or no remorse, under the guilt of the daily breach of this divine law. O remember that custom and example will be no excuse for you, if you walk along with the crowd, in the broad road that leads to destruction.

*On rash Judgment.*

Oct. 4. **C**ONSIDER first, that this commandment is also violated by the sin of *rash judgment*, which robs one's neighbour of his esteem and reputation; if not with regard to others, by publishing to them the suspicions we have conceived, or the judgment we make to his advantage; at least within our own breast, by despising and condemning him there. O how much is this crime (when fully voluntary, and deliberate) condemned by the word of God! O how contrary it is to all Christian charity! *Judge not*, saith our Lord, (Luke vi. 37.) *and you shall not be judged: condemn not, and you shall not be condemned. Why dost thou judge thy brother?* saith St. Paul, (Rom. xiv. 10.) *or why dost thou despise thy brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ, and every one of us shall render account to God for himself. Let us not therefore judge one another any more.* And again, (1 Cor. iv. 4, 5.) *He that judgeth is the Lord: Therefore judge not before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts.* And again, (Rom. xiv.) *who art thou that judgest the ser-*

vant of another? It is to his own master he must stand or fall. He that detracteth his brother, saith St. James, chap. iv. 11. &c. or he that judgeth his brother, detracteth the law, and judgeth the law. There is one lawgiver and judge, that is able to destroy, and to deliver: but who art thou that judgest thy neighbour? O let us always attend to these divine admonitions, and fly rash judgment like death?

Consider 2dly, the injury, done by *rash judgment*, first to God himself, to whom all *judgment* belongs; by usurping his authority, in judging and condemning others, without his licence; and even presuming to claim his prerogative, of diving into the intentions and secrets of hearts. Then the wrong that is done to one's neighbour, by passing sentence upon him unheard, and without sufficient knowledge of his guilt, (which way of proceeding would be highly unjust in any judge, or court whatsoever) and this without any sufficient authority over him, or observing any order of justice in his regard. Moreover rash judgment, when fully voluntary, is also highly criminal, upon account of its opposition to those two most essential virtues of a Christian, *charity* and *humility*. For the rashly censuring and condemning one's neighbour must needs destroy *charity*: since the property of charity is to *think no evil*, 1 Cor. xiii. 5. And how can it be otherwise, for *charity* is *love*: and *love*, so far from rashly imputing imaginary crimes to the beloved, is ever willing to overlook even real defects, when duty does not oblige to correct them. And as to *humility*, nothing can be more opposite to it, than the despising and undervaluing one's neighbour, and secretly preferring one's self before him in one's own breast: now this is commonly one of the chief ingredients in *rash judgment*.

Consider 3dly, that in order to overcome the vicious habit of judging rashly of one's neighbour, one must search out the root of this evil, and then lay the axe to the root, in order to cut it up. *Rash*

*judgments*, in many persons spring from pride, and from their having too good an opinion of themselves; which makes them ever ready to believe the worst of others, and to censure them, in order to exalt themselves. In others, the root of their *rash judgments* is the ill-will, hatred, or envy they bear to their neighbours, which inclines them to put always the worst construction on what they say or do, and to condemn their intentions even in their best actions. Others, again, because they are evil themselves, judge ill of their neighbours by themselves. Others, in fine, from the presumption they have of their own wit, great talents, and experience, arrogate to themselves a privilege of passing their judgment upon every one, and yet proudly imagine they are out of the danger of rashness, or injustice, in so doing: such is the confidence they have in their own clear-sightedness: though alas! it often pretends to discover the mote in another's eye, and sees not the beam in its own. The general remedy for all rash judgments, from whatsoever source they proceed, is to have our eyes always upon ourselves, and upon our own faults, and to turn it away from our neighbours. To endeavour also to be sensible, how great an evil it is to judge and condemn our neighbours, and how pernicious it is to our own souls; to make frequent acts of detestation of it; and to pray continually to our Lord to be delivered from it.

Conclude to guard against all manner of rash judgments, as being hateful to God, injurious to your neighbours, and destructive of the salvation of your own souls. The study and practice of *charity* and *humility* is the sovereign means to get the victory over this pernicious evil.

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*On avoiding all Manner of Lies.*

Oct. 5. **C**ONSIDER first, in what manner the vice of *lying* is every where condemned in the word of God. Our Saviour tells us, (*John* viii. 44.) that the devil is a liar, and the father of

lies : and (*Apocalypse* xxi. 6.) that *all liars shall have their portion in the pool burning with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.* And the Holy Ghost assures us by the mouth of the wise man, (*Prov.* vi. 16, 17.) that *the Lord hateth a lying tongue,* and (chap. xiv. 22.) that *lying lips are an abomination to the Lord:* and (chap. xiii. 5.) that *the just shall hate a lying word;* and (*Wisd.* i. 11.) that *the mouth that lyeth killeth the soul;* and (*Eccl.* xx. 27.) that *even a thief is better than a man that is always lying: but that both of them shall inherit destruction;* and (v. 26.) that *a lie is a foul blot in a man;* and (v. 28.) that *the manners of lying men are without honour,* and that *their confusion is with them without ceasing:* besides many other texts against lies and liars. O let us fly and detest this evil, which is thus frequently condemned by the Spirit of God, as hateful to him, and pernicious to our souls!

Consider 2dly, that the reason why *lies* are so hateful to God, is because God is essentially *Truth;* and therefore as all *lies* are opposite to truth, they are all opposite to God, and cannot but offend him. Every known untruth, by reason of this opposition to the God of Truth, is essentially evil, and ought not to be committed for any consideration whatsoever; God himself cannot dispense with any one, or give him a licence to tell a *lie*, no more than he himself can *lie.* Some *lies* indeed are more heinous than others; either because they more directly strike at revealed truths, or tend to degrade God and religion; or because of the injury they do to our neighbours, either in soul or body, goods or good name: and these are all mortal sins: but there is no lie whatsoever, not even such as are told in jest, or such as are *officious,* or for excuse, but what are essentially sinful, and therefore ought not to be committed, not even for saving the whole world; because *evil is not to be committed that good may come of it.* Besides, what good can be expected from



turning one's back upon truth, and sheltering one's self in a lie? O! let us rather die than thus offend the God of Truth.

Consider 3dly, that it is a dangerous thing, for any Christian to make slight of telling a lie, though it were only a lie of vanity, or for an excuse, and without any design to prejudice one's neighbour. But it is still more dangerous to indulge one's self in a habit or custom of telling this kind of lies. For it is no small evil, wilfully to dishonour the Sovereign Truth at any time, and to lead one's neighbour into error, by obtruding falsehood upon him for truth: but it is a very great evil to make nothing of entertaining a habit of wilfully offending God by such lies; and this upon a notion, that if one can but escape hell, it matters not how much one otherwise offends him. For how can such a habit as this be consistent with loving God above all things? or how can there be any security for a soul that treats her God in this slighting manner? Oh no! let us not deceive ourselves: God is not to be mocked. Those that make slight of a habit of lies, can never be friends of the God of Truth, nor reasonably expect to be eternally with him.

Conclude never to tell a known lie upon any account whatsoever, much less for avoiding a little anger, or any other slight occasion. Nothing can justify a lie, not even the saving one's life by it, because it is an offence to God; who ought not to be offended, even to save the world.

*Thou shalt not covet, &c.*

Oct. 6. **C**ONSIDER first, that after forbidding the sins and injuries committed by words and actions, God forbids also, in these two last commandments, the sins of thoughts and desires; particularly with relation to *avarice*, and *lust*: *Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife: Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's goods.* These two kinds of irregular desires and inclinations, suggested by the lust

of the flesh, and by the love of the mammon of this world, are like a raging pestilence, which has infected the greatest part of mankind from the beginning : like another deluge, they even overflow the earth. Money and carnal pleasures are the two great idols set up by Satan, to confront the living God : to these, men sacrifice their hearts and affections ; the young by the *concupiscence of the flesh*, the old by the *concupiscence of the eyes* ; and thus both old and young are for the most part debauched from the love and service of God, and made slaves to sin, and victims to hell. Ah ! Christians, never think yourselves innocent, though you keep your hands from stealing, and your bodies from fornication or adultery, if you do not at the same time keep your eyes and your hearts from *coveting*. Such you are in the sight of God, as your affections and desires are : if these are criminal, you cannot be innocent.

Consider 2dly, that by this precept, *thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife*, we are recommended to set a guard upon our thoughts, upon our hearts, upon our eyes, and upon all our other senses, that the fire of concupiscence may not make its way through any of these avenues into our souls, to burn them here with lust, and with the dark flames of hell hereafter. Ah ! what have we not to apprehend from the depraved inclinations of our corrupt nature, if we do not turn away both our senses, and our imaginations, from all alluring objects, and shut those gates against the first suggestions of evil ? How much more are all Christians bound to fly all such occasions, as expose them to a more evident and immediate danger of lewd thoughts and desires ; as a great part of modern comedies, balls, masquerades, &c. are known to do, more especially with relation to the younger sort. And yet alas ! how few are there that are not too fond of these dangerous diversions, which are so near a kin to the pamps of Satan, which we renounced at our baptism !

Consider 3dly, the necessity of restraining also the

corrupt inclinations of that other branch of concupiscence, which relates to our neighbour's goods. In order to this, we must in the first place renounce and detest all *unjust* desires, and such as any way tends to withhold from our neighbour, or deprive him of what, in justice, belongs to him; as also all wishes of his death, that we may come at his possessions; all desires of public or private calamities, for one's own particular advantage, &c. But then we must not stop here: we must lay the axe to the root of all these evils, which is the love of this mammon of iniquity; this unhappy vice of *covetousness*, which if it be not cut up and cast out of the heart, will not suffer either justice or grace long to reside there: according to that of the apostle, (1 *Timoth.* vi. 9, 10.) *They that want to become rich fall into temptation, and into the snare of the devil, and into many unprofitable and hurtful desires, which drown men in destruction and perdition: for covetousness is the root of all evils.*

Conclude to fight till death against both these branches of concupiscence, as capital enemies of the soul; which if not guarded against, and overcome, are capable of doing us infinitely more harm, than all the devils in hell.

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#### *On the Precepts of the Church.*

Oct. 7. **C**ONSIDER first, that all Christians are under a strict obligation of keeping also the *precepts*, that is, the *commandments* of the church; because the law of God commands us so to do. *Honour thy father and thy mother*, is a commandment, which not only obliges us to obey them that are our parents according to the flesh, but also our *spiritual* parents, at least in matters *spiritual*; viz. the pastors of the Church of Christ. To these Christ our Lord has said, (*Luke* x. 16.) *He that heareth you, heareth me, and he that despiseth you, despiseth me.* To these he has given *the keys of the kingdom of heaven*, with the power of *binding and loosing*, *St. Matt.* xvi. 19. xviii. 18. *These he has*

sent as his Father sent him, St. John xx. 21. With these he has promised to abide till the end of the world, St. Matt. xxviii. 20. These he has made his *ministers*, the stewards and dispensers of his mysteries and sacraments, (1 Cor. iv. 1.) and his *ambassadors*, 2 Cor. v. 20. These he has given us for *pustors and teachers*, Eph. iv. 11, 12, &c. To these he has given the charge of our souls : and therefore the apostle calls upon us, (Heb. xiii.) not only to *follow their faith*, (v. 7.) but also to *obey them, and to submit ourselves to them*, (v. 17.) O blessed obedience ! it is in vain to pretend to obey our Father in heaven, if we refuse to obey our mother the church.

Consider 2dly, the excellency of these precepts of the church, and their admirable tendency to bring us to God, by obliging us to set aside so many of our days for prayer and other religious duties ; to humble ourselves so often, and to do penance for our sins, by fasting and abstinence ; to frequent the sacraments and sacrifice of the church, &c. O these precepts are not mere human inventions, or injunctions : they have been dictated by the Spirit of God, which always resides and presides in the church ; they are enacted by divine commission and authority : they are, generally speaking, so many determinations of the divine law. The law of God and of nature requires that we should dedicate a considerable part of our time to the divine worship : the precepts of the church point out the particular days we are to set aside for this end. The divine law calls upon us to pay to our God the homage of adoration, praise, and sacrifice : the precepts of the church prescribe for this end the frequenting the great sacrifice of the death of Christ, offered up to God in the holy mysteries. The law of God obliges us to do penance for our sins ; to restrain our passions and lusts ; to offer up pure and humble prayer to God ; and consequently to fast and abstain, as far as shall be necessary for us, to answer these ends : the church by her precepts orders the times for this penitential exer-

cise ; lest if we were left to ourselves, we should wholly neglect it. The law of Christ ordains the confession of our sins, and the worthily receiving the sacred communion : the precepts of the church require, under pain of excommunication, that this divine law should be complied with in such manner, as not to defer the confession of our sins beyond the year, nor to neglect the receiving the holy communion, at least at Easter. See then, my soul, how necessary it is for thee to observe all these precepts of the church, in order to comply with the law and commandments of God.

Consider Sdly, the unhappy case of all such Christians, as despise these precepts of the church of Christ : alas ! they despise in effect both Christ and his Father, (*Luke x. 16.*) and will be treated accordingly at his tribunal. The wilful transgression of any one of these ordinances of God's church is certainly criminal in the sight of God : how much more the contempt of them ? And what then must we think of the wretched state of so many souls, that make a practice of transgressing these laws of the church, by breaking through the rules prescribed by her decrees and constitutions, with regard to festivals, fasts, and abstinences, or with regard to the frequentation of the sacraments, at the times appointed ? Ah ! such undutiful children as these, that live in an habitual disobedience to God and his church, deserve not the name of children, or of Catholic Christians ; and without a sincere conversion from these their evil ways, must expect undoubtedly to be reckoned another day amongst *heathens* and unbelievers.

Conclude to observe religiously the laws and ordinances of the church of God, and to see they be religiously observed by all under your care. If there be a necessity at any time of your being dispensed with in any of these church laws, go to your pastors for this dispensation ; but presume not to dispense with yourselves. Only the pastors of the church can dispense in the precepts of the church.

*On the Vice of Pride.*

Oct. 8. **C**ONSIDER first, that pride is an inordinate love, conceit, or desire of self-excellence; or a delight and complacency in one's own self, by occasion of some real or imaginary excellency which we have, or pretend to have, either in virtue, or grace, or knowledge, or in any other goods or qualities, whether external or internal, considered merely as the means to make us excel, and as such puffing us up with self-esteem, and causing us to prefer ourselves before others, and to despise others. This pride is the mother of all vices, but more especially of ambition, presumption, and vain-glory; from which it differs only in this, that ambition aims at *excelling* in the way of honour and dignity, and in being set above others; presumption seems to *excel* in the way of great achievements, attempted upon confidence of one's own strength; vain-glory pretends to *excellence* in the way of glory, that is, in the way of being known, praised, and esteemed by others: but pride looks chiefly at herself, and sets up her own proper *self-excellence* for her idol; which she worships, loves, esteems, and desires above all things, and to which she sacrifices all things else. O deliver us, dear Lord, from this enormous evil, the first-born of Satan, and the original parent both of death and hell.

Consider 2dly, that St. Gregory (L. 23. Mor. c. 4.) distinguishes in pride four different kinds, or four ways of being guilty of this worst of vices. First, by attributing to one's self, and not to God, the good things we have from him, either of nature or of grace. 2dly, by ascribing at least to one's own merits, what we have received from God, and not giving him the whole glory. 3dly, by conceiting ourselves to have graces, talents, or perfections, which indeed we have not, and being puffed up in ourselves with this *imaginary* excellence. 4thly, by high esteeming and valuing ourselves for the graces

or good qualities we *really have*; and applauding ourselves in such manner in them, as to affect to have them to ourselves alone, and to despise others, or envy them the like accomplishments. All these, in their nature, are mortal sins, when fully consented to; and are the worst kind of mortal sins; because of all the seven capital vices, pride is acknowledged by divines to be the worst, by reason of its extreme opposition to God, in setting itself up, as it were in his place, and satan like, lifting up its head against him, and affecting a *self-excellence*, which belongs to God alone. Hence we learn from the apostle, (*Rom. i.*) the proud have often been delivered up and abandoned by God to a reprobate sense, and suffered to fall even into the most shameful and unnatural lusts, in punishment of their self-conceit. O how enormous then must the vice of pride be in the eyes of God, when the falling into such abominations as these is the punishment of it!

Consider 3dly, that pride is a mortal sin, not only when one directly incurs the guilt, of any of those four kinds or ways, mentioned by St. Gregory, by one's own deliberate judgment and will; (at least as often as the matter is of moment); but also when one incurs the guilt of any of them indirectly, or equivalently: by taking such complacency in one's self, or carrying one's self in such manner to others, as if one judged one's self to have, or desired that others should judge one to have, any excellency, or perfection of one's self, and not from God. As also when our affection, or inclination to our own excellence, or the conceit we have of it, is joined with a great irreverence, or injury to God, or a considerable contempt of our neighbour, or detriment to him: or again, when through the love, or conceit we have of our own excellence, we withdraw ourselves from the subjection we owe to God and his holy law, or to the authority of superiors established by him. Ah! how common are all these sins! How many ways are poor unhappy mortals daily guilty of this

highest of treasons against the Divine Majesty! And how dreadful are the consequences of this guilt, both in time and eternity!

Conclude to examine well thy conscience upon this head of pride: for it is a subtle evil which often imposes upon mortals; insomuch that they who are the most guilty of it, oftentimes will not believe themselves to be proud. O take care not to be deceived by this *noonday devil!* watch and pray continually against it: spare no pains to cast it out of thy soul. If thou thinkest it has no share in thee, thou deceivest thyself: there cannot be a more evident proof of thy being proud, than to imagine thyself to be out of the reach of this vice.

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*On the Malignity of Pride.*

Oct. 9. **C**ONSIDER first, the malignity of pride, inasmuch as it corrupts the very vitals of the soul, and leaves nothing sound in it. It is a rottenness at the heart, that spoils the fairest plants that grow on this infected soul. The fruits of the good works of the proud, are like those that are said to grow on the banks of the lake of Sodom, fair to the eye, but rotten within. Their virtues are blasted, and have nothing but an outward appearance; because the root of them is corrupted. God is not with them, truth is not with them, grace is not with them. They have no foundation within them for any solid good; because they want humility: for *God resists the proud, and gives his grace to the humble.*

Consider 2dly, the malignity of pride from another head, viz. from its filling the soul with all other evils. For this dreadful vice, not content with shutting the gate against grace, and against all good, and even changing those that should be the most virtuous actions into crimes; opens wide the door to all manner of sin and iniquity; by setting all the other passions at work to serve, by all kinds of extravagancies, its unbridled appetite after *self-excellence.* To gratify



this predominant passion, *covetousness* is employed, to procure, right or wrong, those riches that may furnish the means of *excelling*; and *prodigality*, in the expending of them. *Anger*, hatred, and revenge are let loose against all that thwart or stand in the way of its lawless pretensions. Inferiors are oppressed; they are treated with *contempt* and scorn: equals are *envied*, as rivals in honour; they are *judged*, *condemned*, and *slandered*: superiors are slighted and *disobeyed*, &c. not to speak of innumerable other mortal evils, quarrels, murders, rebellions, heresies, blasphemies, and what not, which are frequently the productions of pride: besides all the abominations of lust, and all its fatal offspring, to which the proud are so often delivered up, in punishment of their arrogance. Sweet Jesus, deliver us from all these evils, by teaching us to be *meek and humble of heart*.

Consider 3dly, that the malignity of pride is chiefly owing to its opposition to the glory of God, and to his divine truth. God is the Being of all beings: all things else without him are nothing: all excellence and all glory is his: we have nothing, excepting sin, but what we have from him: we know nothing but through him: we can do nothing without him. To pretend therefore to any excellence as to our own property, or to any glory as due to us, or to appropriate to ourselves the gifts and graces of God, and to be puffed up with them, and to glory in them as our own, is a sacrilegious robbery of that which belongs to God alone: it is attempting to seat ourselves in his throne: it is claiming a share in his self-excellence, which is no less essential to him than his self-existence, independence, and infinity. For as none but God can be of himself, so none but God can *excel* of himself. For this reason, *every proud man is an abomination to the Lord* (*Prov. xvi. 4.*); because he pretends to rival him in his glory, and, like the arch-rebel Lucifer, to dispute his prerogative of being alone *self-excellent*. His pride is a lie, and of

the very worst sort of lies, even that which was first framed by the father of lies, in pretending to be like to the *Most High*, and therefore it is most hateful to the eternal truth.

Conclude to detest and abhor, and to fly with all thy power from this abominable vice, which is so hateful to God, and so pernicious to all that suffer their souls to be corrupted with it. Give ear to the scripture, (*Iob. iv. 14.*) *never suffer pride to reign in thy mind, nor in thy words, for from it all perdition took its beginning.*

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*Remedies against Pride.*

Oct. 10. **C**ONSIDER first, that in order to overcome thy pride, thou must not only be thoroughly sensible of the malignity of this evil in itself, and of the dreadful consequences of its being suffered to reign in the soul; but must also be convinced, that thou thyself art continually in danger from it; that it is an evil deeply rooted in thy own corrupt nature; an obstinate and subtle enemy, that will never cease to wage war against thee all thy life long; and that is so much the more dangerous to thee, by how much the less he is apprehended by thee: so that the first, and most necessary prescription against pride, is to study well, that we may know our corruption in this kind, by the help of a frequent review of our own interior, and of the secret springs that rule and set all our passions to work: that so having rightly discovered the monster that affects to hide himself in the inmost recesses of the soul, we may declare an eternal war against it, by perpetual watching, praying, and fighting, and frequently repeated acts, both exterior and interior, of the virtue of humility.

Consider 2dly, that the true knowledge of God, and of ourselves, acquired by the daily exercise of meditation and mental prayer, is the sovereign remedy against all manner of pride: for all our preten-

sions to *excellence*, all our groundless imaginations, by which we take ourselves for *something*, all these fumes of self-conceit, which are so apt to fly up, and to turn our heads, upon occasion of any advantages, real or imaginary, which we ascribe to ourselves, are all put to flight, when the light of the knowledge of God comes in and takes place in the soul, and shews her that all that is not God is a mere nothing. All human greatness, all power, all height, and depth, and every thing that is created, dwindles away and quite vanishes, when God appears: *heaven and earth flee away from before his face, and no place is found for them, (Apocal. xx. 11.)* how much less can poor man glory in his sight? O how can *earth and ashes be proud*, in the presence of the immense, eternal, infinite Deity?

Consider 3dly, that the light of God, which by a diligence in the exercise of mental prayer flows more and more into the soul, not only serves to humble us in his sight, and to quell our pride, by the sense it gives us of his infinite greatness and majesty; before whom we are but wretched worms, and less than nothing: but also helps us to that true knowledge of ourselves, which obliges us to vilify and despise ourselves. For here we are made sensible what poor creatures indeed we are: how mean is our extraction; as to the body, from dirt and corruption; as to the soul, from nothing: how early we were infected with sin: how full we are now of all kind of miseries, both corporal and spiritual: what a perpetual repugnance we have to good, and what a violent propensity to evil, from our very childhood: how much we are encompassed with darkness, ignorance, and errors; exposed daily to innumerable dangers; capable of all that is wicked, and incapable of ourselves of any good: certain of death (though we know not when, where, nor how) which will make over these bodies of ours to worms and corruption, and transmit these souls to judgment; and dreadfully ~~quor-~~

tain as to the issue of that great trial, and our eternal lot. And shall not all this suffice to cure our pride?

Conclude to spare no pains to acquire these two most necessary branches of Christian science, *viz.* the true knowledge of God, and the true knowledge of yourselves: they are the foundation of true humility, and of all good; and are to be learnt by meditation and prayer.

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*Other Prescriptions against Pride.*

Oct. 11. **C**ONSIDER first, that in order to overcome your pride, it will also be of good service frequently to reflect how vain and empty, fading, and perishable, those things generally are, which men are apt to be proud of; such as worldly honours, riches, beauty, fine cloaths, &c. which give no real intrinsic value or worth to the possessors; nor serve to make them one whit the better in the sight of God: but on the contrary, if they are proud of them, make them by much the worse; yea odious and contemptible, both to God and man. For every one hates and despises pride in another, how much soever he cherishes it in himself: and such as proudly seek to *exalt themselves*, are generally *humbled*, both by God and man. And as to the gifts of grace, or other talents, received from God, it is still more criminal to be proud of them, because the more valuable they are in themselves, the greater is the sacrilege in robbing God of the glory of them, by taking pride in them, as if they were our own, and not his. O! it is humility alone that is both the guardian and the best ornament of all other virtues: they quickly degenerate, and turn into other vices, when we begin to be proud of them.

Consider 2dly, that we may also extract an excellent antidote against the poison of pride, from the very consideration of the deformity of our pride. For nothing sure can be more humbling to the soul, than to be made rightly sensible of the extravagant

folly and madness, as well as the sacrilegious impiety, and diabolical presumption she stands guilty of, by lifting up her head against her God by arrogance and self-conceit. The consequence of which is, that she is given up by him, to be possessed at present by the worst of devils; and becomes herself a very devil in his eyes; black, ugly, and odious, like the devil, and condemned to be a victim of hell with him. And can a soul that seriously considers all this, suffer herself to be any longer possessed by pride? Can such an odious monster, when brought out of its dark lurking hole, and set before the eyes of the soul, with all the train of woes that attend and follow it, find any more any room in her? O, it is true, with regard to mortal sin in general, and to pride in particular, that the deformity and malignity of the guilt of it in the soul, and the eternal punishment of it hereafter, are most humbling considerations. For surely a soul that is turned away from God by mortal sin, and a soul that is eternally banished from him, and given up to the worm that never dies, and to the fire that is never extinguished, in the dungeons of hell, can neither of them have any thing to be proud of! Mortal sin, and hell, those two most dreadful of all evils, leave no room for pride.

Consider 3dly, who it is, that is *the king over all the children of pride*? Whose standard do they all join, in opposition to the God that made heaven and earth? Alas! they all join with Satan, their mortal enemy: they follow him against their God, their Maker, their Redeemer, and their sovereign Good. And what expectations can they have, from following him for their king, who is already himself condemned to hell? Ah! no other than endless confusion, perpetual discontent and uneasiness here, and everlasting damnation hereafter. Oh! it was this joining with the king of pride, that has entailed all kind of miseries upon the sons of Adam. To remedy these, the Son of God came down from heaven, by the mystery of

his incarnation; and humbled himself even to the death of the cross; to oppose the standard of his humility to the standard of the devil. He calls all men to join his royal standard, by *learning of him to be meek and humble of heart*; promising to rescue them that follow him from the tyranny and slavery of the wicked one; to give peace and rest to their souls here, and eternal joys hereafter. And shall we balance for one moment with which of these two we shall join, the king of pride, or the King of humility; the tyrant of hell, or the God of heaven? See here, my soul, most urgent motives to renounce thy pride, and to embrace humility. The one is suggested by Satan, who is damned for it; the other is taught by word and example, by the Son of God, who, by it, has opened heaven for us: the one is the road to hell, the other to heaven.

Conclude to renounce the king of pride, with all his pomps, and to shake off this heavy yoke, which never suffers the soul to rest; and, instead of it, to take up the sweet yoke of Jesus Christ, by meekness and humility; and thou shalt find refreshment here, and heaven hereafter.

## On vain Glory.

Oct. 12. **C**ONSIDER first, that the vice of *vain glory* is nearly allied to that of pride, and has for its object an imaginary *excellence*, in the way of *glory*; that is, in the way of being known and talked of, praised and esteemed by others. See here, my soul, a dangerous vice: not only with regard to the children of the world, whose thoughts, words, and actions, are generally influenced by the love of praise, honour, and esteem; or by the fear of what the world will say, or think of them: but even with regard to the children of God, who are daily and hourly exposed to its temptations, in the very best of their actions: with the danger of their losing all the fruit of them, and of their being quite vitiated and corrupted by this plague. This was the vice of the

Scribes and Pharisees, who did all their works that they might be honoured and esteemed by men; and therefore their alms, their fasting, their prayers, and other good works, availed them nothing in the sight of God; because vain glory corrupted them all; and at the very time that they were esteemed as saints by the world, made them like devils in the eyes of God. Christians beware of this pernicious evil: watch and pray continually against it.

Consider 2dly, that *vain glory*, which is always dangerous, amounts to the guilt of a mortal sin, whenever the affection of the heart is so far set upon human applause, praise, or esteem, as to love it as much, or more than God; or, as St. Thomas of Aquin expresses it, when a person directs his intention in such manner to the glory of man, as to make it his last end, to which he refers even the works of virtue; and for the sake of which, he does not stick to offend his God. In like manner, it is a mortal sin when a person seeks vain glory by committing mortal sin; for example, by swearing, quarrelling, taking revenge, &c. to shew his courage, or to gain the esteem of being a man of honour; or for fear of being blamed or despised by the world. As also when any person, for the sake of maintaining his esteem, or for fear of being thought less skilful, or less knowing, refuses to seek, or admit of the assistance, or counsel of others; and thus exposes himself to the danger of occasioning some considerable detriment, corporal or spiritual, to himself or to others. In fine, vain glory is a mortal sin, whenever a man glorifies in the gifts and graces of God as if they were his own; and as if he had not received them from God. See, my soul, how many ways this love of worldly honour, glory, and praise, which modern worldlings, like the ancient pagans, take for a virtue, is condemned by sound Christian morality as capital vice, which sends innumerable souls to hell.

Consider 3dly, the malignity of this vice of *vain glory*, from its being the fruitful parent of a numerous

offspring of other pernicious evils, oftentimes worse than itself. St. Gregory reckons up seven daughters of this unhappy mother. 1. *Disobedience*, which despises the ordinances of lawful superiors, for the love of one's own worldly honour or esteem. 2. *Boasting*, that is, vaunting or glorying of one's self, of one's own talents or performances, and ever loving to be talking of one's self: a vice as odious and ridiculous, as it is common in the conversation of the proud and vain glorious. 3. *Hypocrisy*, or making a show of godliness, or sanctity, to gain the esteem of men. 4. *Contention*, or strife, that is, wrangling, brawling, and quarrelling in words, to maintain one's own opinion, right or wrong, or to defend what one has said or done. 5. *Obstinacy*, in adhering to error rather than acknowledge one's self to have been deceived, or to seem to yield or to be overcome. 6. *Discord*, or disagreement of wills and hearts, by occasion of different pretensions, and contests for honour and esteem. 7. *Invention of novelties*, in the way of new opinions, new fashions, or other innovations, brought in to make one's self a name, or to procure esteem or applause. See, Christians, what a train of evils are daily produced by vain glory. And what are all heresies and schisms but a compound of these same evils, and consequently the productions also of vain glory.

Conclude to keep a strict guard against this dangerous enemy of the soul; or it will rob thee of all good, and fill thee with all evil. Daily pray with the royal prophet, *Turn away my eyes, O Lord, that they look not upon vanity*: and as often as in thy words or actions thou findest thyself attacked with the suggestions of this vice, say with the same prophet, *Not to us, O Lord, not to us, but to thy name give glory*.



*Prescriptions against vain Glory.*

7 Oct. 13. **C**ONSIDER first, in order to cure this unhappy itch of vain glory, which is so deeply rooted in our corrupt nature, how little title we have to pretend to any honour, praise, or esteem from any one; we who have so often, and so grievously offended the Creator of all; and who, if we were to be treated according to our deserts, ought rather to be despised, and trampled under foot by all men, yea to be detested and abhorred by all God's creatures. For there is something so black, so odious, so filthy and abominable in wilful sin, that even toads and snakes, were they capable of knowing it, would hate, and fly from the unhappy wretches that are stained with it. What pretensions then can such wretched sinners as we have to any honour, praise, and esteem, whilst we are conscious to ourselves of mortal sin? No other sure than the damned in hell. And can there be any room for vain glory there?

Consider 2dly how truly vain, how empty, how ~~Consider any, how empty, how~~ short, how inconstant is all human glory, and all the praise and esteem of men: it is like a puff of wind, which passes in a moment, and makes us not one jot the better in ourselves: it adds nothing to us in the sight of God, the just and true, and eternal Judge of all merit. O give ear to the devout A. Kempis, l. iii. c. 50. 'The sentiments of men are often wrong  
' in their judgments—what is a man the better for  
' being reputed greater by man? One deceitful man  
' deceives another; one vain man deceives another;  
' the blind deceives the blind; the weak the weak,  
' whilst he extols him; and in truth doth rather con-  
' found him whilst he vainly praises him: for how  
' much each one is in thy eyes, O Lord, so much he  
' is, and no more,' saith the humble St. Francis.  
And again, ch. 14. 'What is all flesh in thy sight,  
' O Lord?—How can he be puffed up with the vain  
' talk of men, whose heart in *truth* is subjected to

‘ God? He will never suffer himself to be moved  
 ‘ with the tongues of them that praise him, who hath  
 ‘ established his whole confidence in God. For  
 ‘ behold all they that talk of him are all nothing;  
 ‘ for they shall pass away with the sound of their  
 ‘ words: but *the truth of the Lord remaineth for  
 ‘ ever,*’ Ps. cxvi.

Consider 3dly, that this passion for glory, honour, praise, and esteem, is not only highly unreasonable, foolish, and vain; it is unjust too, it is impious, it is pernicious. It is unjust and impious, because it tends to rob God of his glory, and to usurp what belongs to him alone; inasmuch as it pretends to appropriate to itself the glory of God’s gifts, which he has reserved for himself. *What hast thou, saith the Apostle, that thou hast not received: and if thou hast received, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it?* 1 Cor. iv. 7. It is also pernicious, inasmuch as it robs man of the reward of his good works, and even poisons the best of his actions, and exposes the actor to the danger of being externally punished for those very works for which he expected an eternal crown. *O take heed, saith our Lord, that you do not your justice before men, to be seen by them: otherwise you shall not have a reward of your Father who is in heaven,* Matt. vi. 1. No: no other reward but that of the Scribes and Pharisees, against whom he pronounces his woes, because *they did all their works to be seen by men, and loved the uppermost seats, and salutations and titles, (Matt. xxiii.) and justified themselves before men:* but, said he, *God knoweth your hearts; for that which is high to men is an abomination before God,* Luke xvi. 14. Ah! it was this love of *human glory* that stood chiefly in their way, and hindered them from submitting to the faith and simplicity of the gospel: *For how can you believe, saith our Lord to them, (John v. 44.) who receive glory one from another: and the glory which is from God alone you do not seek.* So pernicious it is to the soul to be a slave to *vain glory.*

Conclude, O my soul, for thy part, ever to seek the glory of God, by a purity of intention in all thy words and actions : and God will be *thy reward exceeding great*. If what thou art saying or doing be right in his eyes, it matters not what the world thinks or says of thee, or of thy performances : but if he disapproves of thy conduct, it will be of no service to thee, to be esteemed and applauded by the whole world. For ‘ He that has a mind to be  
 ‘ praised by men, whilst he is dispraised by God,  
 ‘ shall not be justified by men, when he shall be  
 ‘ judged by God, nor rescued by men when he shall  
 ‘ be condemned by God.’ St. Augustine Conf. l. x. c. 36.

*On the Vice of Covetousness.*

Oct. 14. **C**ONSIDER first, that the vice of *covetousness* consists in having too great a love, desire, or concern, for money, or other worldly goods and possessions, so as to set one’s heart upon them ; to be uneasy and solicitous about them ; to covet them eagerly, when absent ; to take too great a complacency in them, when present, and to make them the darling of one’s affections. The malignity of this vice may easily be discovered, from its opposition to God, and to his worship ; and to every branch of divine charity : which is so great, that in the language of the Scripture, *covetousness* is named the *erving of idols*, and the *covetous man* is declared to be an *idolater*, (Eph. v. 5. Colos. iii. 5.) because he worships, and loves his money more than God : and what is idolatry, but *worshipping and serving the creature rather than the Creator* ? Rom. i. 25. Yes, the covetous man serves mammon, *the god of this world*, more than the living God of heaven : for the love of mammon he turns his back upon his Maker, neglects his love and service, and is ever ready to break through his heavenly law and commandments, rather than forego his worldly interest ; to which he sacrifices his soul and all ; and for

the sake of which, he hardens his heart against the necessities of his neighbour, and the cries of the poor. O how evidently is here verified that of the wise man, (Eccl. x. 10.) *There is not a more wicked thing than to love money, for such a one setteth even his own soul to sale.*

Consider 2dly, the malignity of this vice of loving money, from its unhappy offspring, that is, from the innumerable evils which it daily produces. It is the mother of theft and robberies, of fraud and deceit, of oppression of the poor, of usury and extortion, and of all manner of injustices; it employs innumerable lies and perjuries to support its darling idol. It is the parent of bribery and corruption, and of all the sad consequences this evil produces in the world. It even creeps into the sanctuary, and too often profanes it with manifold abuses and sacrileges. It has often brought forth heresies and schisms too, (1 *Timoth.* vi. 10.) and with them a deluge of other crimes: it has pillaged and destroyed churches, hospitals, and monasteries, and invaded and carried off the patrimony of the poor, &c. It has even betrayed and sold the Son of God himself. O cursed love of money! How long shalt thou thus, like a second deluge, drown the whole world! When shall thy tyranny have an end? Wilt thou never cease to fill the world with all sorts of crimes, and hell with souls?

Consider 3dly, that this vice of *covetousness*, besides all this brood of evils, which it daily brings forth, produces many other sad effects in the soul of man, even then when it does not hurry him into those more scandalous excesses specified above; and when, in the eyes of the world, it appears more innocent. For where a person, though he covets not perhaps the goods of his neighbour, yet sets his affection too much upon riches, or worldly possessions, and eagerly pursues after money, he quickly loses all relish for heavenly things, and all true sense of devotion; his heart is filled with the love of the world,

and with many cares and anxious solitudes about the things of the world, which, like thorns, choak up the seed of the word, and of the grace of God, and hinder it from bringing forth the fruits of faith, hope, and charity, in their due time. The love of riches overpowers his love of God, and of his neighbour: the care of his eternal salvation is no longer his principal concern: he loses that confidence he ought to have in divine Providence: he neglects religious duties: he does not give alms according to his circumstances: in a word, he is continually in danger of breaking through the law of God, by commission, or omission, for the love of money: so dreadful are the consequences of covetousness, even then when it pretends to keep itself within the bounds of justice!

Conclude to beware of this vice of *covetousness*, as of one of the worst of the enemies of thy soul: so much the more dangerous to thee, as it is too apt to impose upon persons with specious pretexts of worldly prudence and of necessity: insomuch that oftentimes they that are the most covetous, and whose heart is quite set upon this worldly mammon, are scarce sensible of their disease, however grievous and mortal. O take care, my soul, not to deceive thyself, nor to suffer thyself to be deceived. Examine well the bent of thy thoughts, and of the affections of thy heart; and thou wilt easily discover where thy treasure is.

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*Prescriptions against Covetousness, out of Holy Writ.*

Oct. 15. **C**ONSIDER first, in what manner the word of God, in innumerable places, declares itself against this vice of *covetousness*. The wise man tells us, (*Prov. i. 19.*) that *the ways of every covetous man destroy the soul of the possessors*; and (*Eccl. x. 9.*) that *nothing is more wicked than a covetous man*. Isaias (chap. v. 9.) pronounces a *w* against the covetous; and (chap. xxxiii. 15.) pro-

mises eternal blessings to them that *cast away covetousness*. Jeremias threatens the Jews with the worst of evils, (chap. vi. and viii.) *because from the least to the greatest they all were given to covetousness*. Amos also, (ix. 1.) and Habacuc (ii. 6. 9.) denounce the like judgments and woes from God against the *covetous*. Our Lord himself, (*Mark* vii. 22.) reckons *covetousness* amongst those crimes of the heart, that defile a man: and St. Paul (*Rom.* i. 29.) gives it a place in that black list of sins, of which he pronounces, (v. 32.) *that they who do such things are worthy of death; even the second death, of a miserable eternity*. And again (*1 Cor.* vi. 10.) he declares that the *covetous* shall never *possess the kingdom of God*: and (*Eph.* v. 5.) that *they have no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ*. And shall not the thunder of so many terrible sentences, pronounced by the Spirit of God against covetousness, deter Christians from this unhappy love of money?

Consider 2dly, from the word of God, that these riches, which men so earnestly covet, are not capable of making them happy, or of satisfying the heart. *A covetous man*, saith Solomon, (*Ecc.* v. 9.) *shall not be satisfied with money: and he that loveth riches shall reap no fruit from them*. Oh! daily experience confirms to us that truth, which this wisest of men had learnt by his own experience, that the wealth of this world, instead of bringing along with it true content, and peace to the soul, is generally attended with nothing but *vanity and vexation of mind*, *Eccl.* ii. 11. Riches are *deceitful*, (*St. Matt.* xiii.) because they promise a happiness which they cannot give: they are *thorns* (*ibid.*) that wound, and gore the soul: and they expose the possessors to many dreadful dangers of losing their souls for ever: because it is hard to possess them, and not to abuse them, or put confidence in them, or at least set the heart too much upon them: witness that terrible sentence, (*Matt.* xix. 24.) *It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to*

enter into the kingdom of heaven. Hence our Lord pronounces a *wo to the rich*, (Luke vi. 24.) because they have their consolation here. And the apostle, (1 Tim. vi. 9, 10.) warns us against the love of riches, as of all things the most dangerous and pernicious to our souls. O that men would be wise, and lay up in their hearts these Scripture truths! O that they would learn to despise these *false riches*, and only seek for such as are *true*; which men can neither give, nor take away! O that they would always seek to be *rich in good works*; and so to *lay up for themselves treasures in heaven*, where neither *rust nor moth can consume*, nor *thieves break through and steal*! Matt. vi. 20.

Consider 3dly, that the word of God recommends the remembrance of death, and of the shortness and uncertainty of human life, as a powerful remedy against *covetousness*. Alas! how quickly will death be with us! and where shall all our riches be then? *I will say to my soul*, said the rich man, (Luke xii. 19, 20.) *thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thy rest, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said to him: thou fool, this night shall thy soul be called for; and whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?* O how true it is, with regard to the worldly rich; that the satisfaction which they take, or propose to themselves in their wealth, is at the best but a dream: and that, when they have *slept out their short sleep*, they *find nothing in their hands*, Ps. lxxv. No: *we brought nothing with us into this world; and certainly we can carry nothing out*, 1 Tim. vi. 7. Wherefore, *having food, and wherewith to be covered*, let us be content. Now these necessaries will never be wanting to such as *seek in the first place the kingdom of God, and his justice*: we have Christ's own word for it, Matt. vi. 33. Give ear again to the apostle, (Hebr. xiii. 5.) *Let your manners be without covetousness, contented with such things as you have: for he hath said: I will not leave thee, neither will I forsake thee.*

Conclude to oppose these divine lessons, against all the temptations of covetousness and worldly solicitude. If you are poor by condition, be content with your condition : you are more like Jesus Christ and his saints. Take care not to lose, by your murmuring or impatience, the opportunity he gives you of merit. If you are rich, take occasion of humbling yourselves, to see the wide distance between your way of living, and that of your Saviour. Dread the dangers you are exposed to by your riches ; and arm yourselves against them by poverty of spirit, and humility : you have no other security for your souls.

*On the Vice of Impurity.*

Oct. 16. **C**ONSIDER first, that the *lust of the flesh*, or the inordinate love of the unclean pleasures of the flesh, is another raging plague, that has spread itself over the whole earth : and, as it once brought down from heaven the waters of the deluge, which drowned all the world ; and another time fire and brimstone, which consumed whole cities, with all their inhabitants ; so it daily calls down the vengeance of heaven, executed by visible or invisible judgments, upon thousands, cut off before their time, in the midst of their sins, and cast headlong into the bottomless pit. The Scripture has abundantly declared, how detestable this vice is in the sight of God ; by positively assuring us, in many places, that such as are guilty of it, in any of its kinds, shall never enter the kingdom of heaven, (*Rom. i. 1 Cor. vi. Gal. v. Eph. v. Apoc. xxi. and xxii.*) and in particular, in the account it gives of the causes of the deluge, (*Gen. vi.*) by informing us, that the general wickedness of men in this line was so odious in the sight of their Maker, that he was grieved with it to the heart, and even repented him that he had made them, ver. 5, 6, 7. By which strong figures of speech, the Holy Spirit would have us to



understand how enormous this vice of impurity is in the eyes of God, seeing that he, who by nature is incapable of grief or repentance, or any other passion, was determined, by the hatred he bears to it, to destroy all these his creatures, whom before he had so much favoured and loved.

Consider 2dly, that what makes the vice of *the lust of the flesh* so odious in the sight of God, is its particular opposition to *his purity and sanctity*: by its defiling, in a most shameful and beastly manner, that *temple*, which he has sanctified for himself: and this more especially with regard to Christians, whose bodies and souls have both of them been dedicated and consecrated to him in their baptism; both of which by their yielding to impurity, are shamefully violated and profaned; are brought down to the resemblance of brute beasts, and given up to be the hold of unclean devils. *Know you not that you are the temple of God*, saith St. Paul, speaking to all Christians, (1 Cor. iii. 16, 17.) *and that the spirit of God dwelleth in you? But if any man violate the temple of God, him will God destroy.* And again, (ch. vi, 15,) *Know you not that your bodies are the members of Christ, &c.* And (v. 19.) *the temple of the Holy Ghost, who is in you, whom you have from God. And you are not your own. For you are bought with a great price: glorify and carry God in your body.* O Christians, attend to this heavenly doctrine; and see you never more presume to be guilty of so crying a sacrilege, as to profane and defile the temple of the living God; to drive him out of his temple, and to set up filthy idols in his place: see you never bring in the devil thither, and sacrifice your soul to him, for the sake of a base filthy carnal satisfaction, that can last but for a moment.

Consider 3dly, the dreadful consequences of yielding to the vice of impurity, and the dismal slavery to which it reduces the soul. One act presently begets a habit, or violent inclination; this drags the poor soul on to new crimes; and by indulging these, a

custom is formed, which turns into a second nature, infinitely hard to be overcome, and which, without ceasing, exercises a most cruel tyranny upon the soul. Hence follow all those worst of evils, which St. Gregory (l. xxxi. Moral. c. 31.) calls *the daughters of luxury*, or lust, as being the usual effects of a habit of impurity, viz. a blindness, and hardness of heart; a running headlong into the worst of dangers; a thoughtlessness, and insensibility with regard to the judgments of God, and the truths of eternity; an inconstancy with regard to every thing that is good: an aversion to God, and to his service; and a perpetual love, and seeking of one's self; a strong attachment to this world; and a horror, or despair, with regard to the world to come. Such is the unhappy offspring of lust: a train of evils, not to be matched on this side hell. Sweet Jesus! deliver us both from the mother, and the daughters!

Conclude to fly from all impurity, more than death; and from all the dangerous company, on other occasions, that may expose thee to temptations in this kind, more than from a house infected with the plague. The pestilence can only take away the temporal life of the body; but impurity will kill the soul for eternity.

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*Prescriptions against Impurity.*

Oct. 17. **C**ONSIDER first, that the most necessary of all prescriptions and precautions against impurity, is to keep at a distance from the danger, and to fly all the immediate occasions of it; more especially the company and conversation of all such persons as are a temptation to us; as also the reading of loose or idle books; such as romances, plays, &c. the frequenting of masquerades and comedies; the indulging too much the sensual appetite in eating and drinking; the giving too great a liberty to the eyes, (which are the *windows through which the death of lust usually enters into the soul*) or to roving imaginations, and dangerous amusements,

and the leading of an idle and dissipated life. The indulging of one's self in all, or any of these ways, opens the gates of the soul to lust : and *he that loves the danger shall perish in it*, Eccl. iii. 27. This enemy is ever lying in wait for us, to shoot his fiery darts at our heart ; we must then be always upon our guard, and keep ourselves, as much as possible, out of his reach : we must take the alarm at every motion of his, and dread the approach of danger : we must not play, or dally with him, by taking or admitting of any freedoms or liberties, even of a lesser degree : he that will venture to play with a wild beast, must expect a mortal gripe. If our Lord has assured us, (*Matt. v. 28.*) that a wanton glance of the eye is capable to bring death to the soul, how much more a wanton touch, or embrace ?

Consider 2dly, that our corrupt nature is so prone to this evil of impurity, and the allurements and temptations to it are so common, and withal so violent, especially in youth, that the *flight* of the occasions alone will not suffice to gain the victory over this vice without frequent conflicts : (for whither shall we fly, where the flesh and the devil will not follow us ?) and therefore it will be also necessary for us to *fight* ; and consequently to provide ourselves with proper arms for this warfare : and as we are not strong enough of ourselves to overcome such formidable enemies, we must engage heaven on our side, in order to secure the victory. This infers the necessity, if we would get the better of lust, of a diligence in all spiritual exercises ; of frequent and fervent prayer ; of frequenting the sacraments ; of daily reading and meditating on divine truths ; of having frequent recourse to the precious blood of Christ, the source of all grace, by a constant devotion to his sacred passion and death : and of earnestly craving the prayers and intercession of the Blessed Virgin, and of all the holy angels and saints : More especially, when we find ourselves assaulted with these temptations, we must resolutely resist the first

motions of the enemy ; by turning ourselves immediately to Jesus Christ crucified ; calling upon him with all our power, *Lord, save me, or I perish* ; hiding ourselves in his wounds ; and not ceasing to implore his mercy and grace, till the temptation ceases.

Consider 3dly, what kind of arms we must provide for this warfare, *viz.* a lively faith, and a strong confidence in Jesus Christ, joined with an humble diffidence in our own strength ; (for if we have any dependance on the strength of our own resolutions, we shall certainly fall.) A sense also of the presence of God ; and above all things, the fear and love of God. The fear of his divine judgments, that always hang over the heads of willful sinners ; the remembrance of the approaches of death ; the consideration of the worm that shall never die, and of the fire that shall never be quenched, prepared for the punishment of lusts, are certainly powerful restraints to keep the soul from consenting to a crime, which she has reason to apprehend may be followed the next moment by death, judgment, and hell. But the love of God is a still more powerful restraint ; because it discovers such charms in his infinite beauty, and infinite goodness, as make all the allurements of lust appear not only most wretched and contemptible, but also most odious and abominable.

Conclude to make use of all these prescriptions against this mortal enemy of thy soul. Fly whenever thou art able ; for this is a war, in which thou art not allowed to seek the occasions of meeting with the enemy, or of facing him. When thou canst not fly, fight ; but with thy eye turned away from the enemy, and fixed on Christ crucified. Make a good provision for thyself, by the help of daily meditations, of the fear and love of God ; and he will give thee the victory.

*On the Virtue of Chastity.*

Oct. 18. **C**ONSIDER first, the excellence of the virtue of *chastity*; which makes us, in this mortal flesh, resemble in some measure the angels in heaven, (*Matt. xxii. 30.*) and which entitles us to be the special favourites of Jesus Christ, the lover of purity, and the spouse of pure souls: who, when he came amongst us, would not be born but of the purest of virgins; and ever shewed the most particular love to his virgin disciple St. John, (to whom also, on account of his purity, he recommended his Virgin Mother, when he was dying on the cross, *John xix. 27.*) and who in heaven is ever *followed by virgins whithersoever he goeth*: who *sing before the throne, as it were a new canticle*, which none of the rest of the blessed can sing. *Apoc. xiv. 3, 4.* Chastity is the lily of virtues; the bright ornament of the soul: the profession and practice of which, by so many thousands, is one of the greatest evidences of the truth, and of the excellency, of the Christian religion; of the wonderful grace it communicates to its followers; and of the purity and sanctity of the Author of it. O my soul, let us ever esteem, love, and embrace this angelical virtue, which makes its lovers the favourites of heaven.

Consider 2dly, in what manner this virtue is recommended to all Christians, by the apostle, (*1 Thess. iv. 3, 4, 7.*) *This is the will of God*, saith he, *your sanctification* (that is, that you should be *pure and holy*) *that you should abstain from fornication*, (from all uncleanness) *that every one of you should know how to possess his vessel* (his body) *in sanctification and honour; not in the passion of lust, like the Gentiles, who know not God—for God hath not called us to uncleanness, but to holiness*, that is, to purity and chastity. Yes, Christians, the virtue of *chastity*, by the will and law of God, and by the sanctity of the Christian calling, is for all; married, as well as unmarried. The marriage bed must be *chaste*, not on-

ly by keeping their *bed undefiled* with adultery, or any unnatural excess; but also by refraining from every thought, word, or action, that is not confined within the sacred limits fixed by the divine law of matrimony, or that is not referred to any of those holy ends, for which God instituted marriage. O how necessary is this conjugal chastity! O how many thousands are lost in this state, by allowing themselves many criminal liberties, and falsely imagining every thing to be lawful for them, which their unbridled passion suggests! The unmarried also must keep themselves pure and *chaste*, by a constant care absolutely to resist, and to renounce all carnal pleasures, and all the irregular motions or impressions of lust, either in body, or mind.

Consider 3dly, that in order to procure, or maintain, this precious virtue of chastity, besides the necessity of fervent prayer, (for *no one can be continent, except God give it*, Wisd. viii. 21.) two other virtues are also necessary; without which, chastity will not be able to stand her ground for any long time in the soul, *viz.* mortification and humility. By mortification, the *flesh* is brought under subjection to the *spirit*; and by humility, the *spirit* is subjected to God: and thus the whole man becomes regular and orderly, and easily resists the passions of lust. But where the flesh is unmortified, it grows headstrong and unruly; and where the spirit is proud, it is justly abandoned by God to the slavery of those shameful passions, from which it shall never be delivered, but by humility.

Conclude to labour with all thy power for the acquisition of this precious jewel of purity and chastity. O spare no cost to purchase it: it is worth all thou canst give for it, and infinitely more. But remember it will never stay long with thee, if thou give entertainment to its mortal enemies, intemperance and pride.

*On the Vice of Anger.*

Oct. 19. **C**ONSIDER first, that *anger*, in the sense in which it is numbered amongst the capital sins, is *an inordinate love, or desire of revenge*: and is a mortal sin, as often as the evil it wishes, or the vengeance or punishment it pretends to take, is considerably contrary, either to justice, or to Christian charity; that is, to that love we owe to every neighbour, by the law of Christ, even to our greatest enemies. Our anger, or desire of revenge, is contrary to justice, whenever the person we are angry with has not deserved the punishment we desire to inflict; or, though he has deserved it, if we do not observe the order of justice; but make ourselves both judges and executioners too, by taking revenge for ourselves by our own private authority, which is never allowable. Our anger and desire of revenge is contrary to fraternal charity; when, let the cause be ever so just, we prosecute, or punish the offender, not out of the love of justice, but out of hatred, or ill will to the person; or merely to gratify a disorderly passion. In such cases as these our anger and revenge are criminal, because it strikes at one or both of those principal virtues of justice and charity: and where either of these is grievously wounded, there is no soundness in the soul.

Consider 2dly, that anger, passion, and desire of revenge, when deliberately consented to, are also infinitely opposite to those other favourite virtues of Jesus Christ, *meekness, humility, mercy, peace, patience, long-suffering, renouncing our own will, bearing the cross*, and the like, which are all of them strongly recommended by his gospel, and jointly make up the amiable character of his disciples. These are the livery of his servants, by which he expects they should be known and distinguished. These we are to learn of him, *Matt. xi. 29*. If we do not endeavour seriously to study, and practise these lessons,

he will not own us for his disciples: if we do not wear his livery, he will not acknowledge us for his servants. But O how irreconcilable is this passion of anger, when it reigns in the soul, with every one of these Christian virtues! It directly destroys all *meekness*, and consequently *humility*, its individual companion; for anger generally springs from pride and self-love: it is a stranger to *mercy*, according to that of Solomon, (*Prov. xxvii. 4.*) *Anger hath no mercy*: it is even a short madness, that is capable, for the time it lasts, of inflicting the worst of evils, or desiring the worst of judgments: it breaks *peace*, both with God and our neighbour; and banishes it from our own souls: it is the mortal enemy of *patience* and *long-suffering*, for it will endure to suffer nothing: much less will it admit of *the renouncing of our own will*, or of our submitting to *take up the cross*; because these are virtues that strike at its very root, and destroy it wherever they meet with it, and therefore it cannot endure them. And shalt thou, my soul, any longer indulge a passion that robs thee at once of all these lovely virtues; and, instead of a servant, and a disciple, makes thee an enemy of Jesus Christ?

Consider 3dly, what a train of other evils and sins usually accompany, or follow, this passion of anger: what oaths, curses, and blasphemies; what affronts, reproaches, and injuries; what quarrels, strife, and brawls; yea sometimes bloodshed and murder too; what malice, hatred and revenge: besides the scandal that is given to those we are angry with, the robbing them not only of their peace, but also of the grace of God, by provoking them to sin; as one fire is apt to enkindle or nourish another. Not to speak of many other sad effects of this vice, which is frequently pernicious to the health of the body, as well as that of the soul; and makes them that are slayes to it unsupportable both to themselves, and to all that have any dealings with them. O, my soul, let us ever detest this infernal fury, which daily pro-



duces so much mischief in the world, to the eternal damnation of innumerable souls.

Conclude to give ear to the heavenly lessons against anger and revenge, so often inculcated in holy writ; to learn them well, and to follow them in practice. *Rom. xii. 17, &c. Render to no man evil for evil . . . if it be possible, as much as is in you, have peace with all men. Revenge not yourselves, my dearly beloved, but give place to wrath: for it is written, revenge is mine, I will repay saith the Lord. But if thy enemy be hungry, give him to eat, &c. Be not overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. Eph. iv. 24, 26, &c. Put on the new man, &c. Let not the sun set upon your anger . . . let all bitterness, and anger, and indignation, and clamour, and blasphemy, be put away from you, with all malice: and be ye kind to one another, &c. Gal. v. 19, &c. The works of the flesh are manifest . . . enmities, contentions, emulations, wrath, quarrels, dissensions, &c. Of which I foretel you . . . that they who do such things shall not obtain the kingdom of God. But the fruits of the spirit is charity, joy, peace, patience, benignity, goodness, long-suffering, mildness, &c. O how happy are those souls in whom the Spirit of God produces these fruits! But how miserable are they in whom the opposite spirit brings forth those other dead works of the flesh, the end of which is the second death!*

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*Remedies against the Vice of Anger.*

Oct. 20. **C**ONSIDER first, that, in order to subdue the passion of anger, and to keep it within the bounds fixed by the divine law, we must *watch*, we must *pray*, and we must *fight* against it. But to the end we may be quite in earnest in this warfare, we must, in the first place, be thoroughly convinced how dangerous an enemy we have to deal with; that our all is here at stake; and that, if we suffer this tyrant to hold the dominion of our souls,

neither the gift of tongues, nor prophecy, nor knowledge, nor faith, though strong enough to move mountains, or to raise the dead to life, nor giving our whole substance to the poor, nor our bodies to the flames, will ever bring us to Jesus Christ: because as long as we refuse to take up his yoke upon us, by denying ourselves, and learning of him to be meek and humble of heart, we are none of his, for we have not his spirit; and therefore he will declare to us: *I know you not: depart from me ye workers of iniquity.* O ye slaves to anger and revenge, have you ever well considered this? O how is it possible, that so many thousands that pretend to believe the gospel, and that expect to be saved by it, should be so indifferent about the subduing this mortal enemy to the spirit of the gospel, and to the salvation of their souls.

Consider 2dly, more in particular, those three prescriptions against this passion, viz. *watching, praying, and fighting.* First we must *watch* the motions of this enemy, whose attacks are the most dangerous when they are sudden and unforeseen: and therefore we must forecast, for example, in the morning, the occasions in which we may likely meet with provocations or temptations, that so we may either decline them, or at least prepare and arm ourselves against them. Secondly we must *pray*, with all the fervour and earnestness of our soul, for the victory, which God alone can give; and we must pray with an humble distrust in ourselves, and an entire confidence in God, through the merits of the precious blood of Jesus Christ, the great pattern of meekness, patience, and humility. Thirdly we must *fight*; by resisting, without delay, the first assault of the enemy; by calling in all the powers of the soul to still the storm that begins to arise; by running to the embraces of the cross; by turning away from the temptation, and going out of the company; or at least by keeping silence till the commotion is over,

or answering nothing but with sweetness and meekness.

Consider 3dly, that in order to overcome our passion, we must also learn to despise and humble ourselves: for anger usually proceeds from an unhappy pride, which makes us ever unwilling to be thwarted or contradicted, or opposed by any one; and therefore makes us swell with indignation, and fly at them that oppose us, and seek to revenge every little slight we receive, either in word or deed. Alas! if we did but know ourselves, and what poor wretches indeed we are, and what we have deserved by our sins, there would be no room left for our being angry with any person, for either slighting or offending us, who, by our having so often, and so grievously offended our Creator, have justly deserved that all his creatures should rise up against us, and revenge his cause upon us; and that they should both despise us and abhor us.

Conclude to make use of all these remedies against this unhappy passion, and never to make any truce with it till thou hast brought it under: otherwise it will fill thee with sin, and will never suffer either peace or grace to abide in thy soul.

*On the Vice of Intemperance.*

Oct. 21. **C**ONSIDER first, that another capital enemy of the soul is the vice of *intemperance*; that is, of immoderation, or excess, in eating or drinking, which is a mortal sin, as often as it exposes a person to the danger of a considerable prejudice, either in his soul or body, health or reason; or when it shortens his days, as it frequently happens, like a slow poison, though the effects of it are not immediately perceived: and, in general, when, for the sake of the pleasure in eating or drinking, a person does not stick to transgress the commandments of God, or the church; or otherwise sets his affections so much upon gratifying his sensual appe-

tite as to make this the study and business of his life ; like those of whom the apostle says, (*Phil. iii.*) that they *make a God of their belly* ; and of whom he pronounces, with tears, that they are *enemies of the cross of Christ, and that their end is destruction*. O how true it is, that the vice of intemperance is absolutely irreconcilable with the spirit of Christianity, and with that penitential and mortified life, which is enjoined by the gospel as the narrow way that leads to everlasting life ! O ! it is an enemy indeed to the cross of Christ.

Consider 2dly, the innumerable evils in every kind that are the daily consequences of sins of intemperance. How they change men into brutes ; rob them of their reason ; destroy their health ; bring upon them a variety of diseases ; shorten their lives ; consume their substance ; disturb the peace of their families ; withdraw from their wives and children their necessary substance ; give scandal and bad example to their neighbours ; foment their passions and lusts ; enslave them to their sensual inclinations ; make them unfit for prayer, and other spiritual exercises ; and quite dull and insensible to the things of God : in a word, how they shut the gate against the grace of God, and all that is good, and open it to all that is evil. The consequence of which is, that these sins, when indulged, and once come to a habit, are the most difficult of all to be cured, and too often, not to say generally, follow men to their graves ; and plunge their impenitent souls into those flames, where, with the rich glutton, (*Luke xvi.*) they shall hunger and thirst for all eternity, and never obtain the least refreshment.

Consider 3dly, in what manner the Holy Ghost declares himself against the vice of intemperance in the word of God. *Who hath wo ?* saith Solomon, *Prov. xxiii. 29, 30.* *Whose father hath wo ? Who hath contentions ? Who falls into pits ? Who hath wounds without cause, &c. ? Surely they that pass their time in wine, and study to drink off their cups.*

Ecclus. xix. 2. *Wine and women make wise men fall away, &c.* Isaias v. 22. *Wo to you that are mighty to drink wine, and stout men at drunkenness.* St. Luke xxi. 34. *Take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness . . . and that day come upon you suddenly.* Rom. xiii. 12, 13. *Let us cast off the works of darkness, &c. Walk honestly as in the day, not in rioting and drunkenness, &c.* 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10, *Be not deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers . . . nor drunkards, &c. shall possess the kingdom of God.* Gal. v. 19, &c. *The works of the flesh are manifest, which are fornication, uncleanness . . . drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I foretel you, as I have foretold to you, that they who do such things shall not obtain the kingdom of God.* O see, ye gluttons and drunkards, enemies of the cross of Christ, where your portion is like to be, since you have no share in the kingdom of God.

Conclude to meditate well upon these Scripture truths, and these dreadful woes pronounced against intemperance; and never to be so foolish and mad as to sell thy birthright in God's eternal kingdom, with all the ravishing joys of his heavenly banquet, for so mean, so unworthy, so beastly a thing, as the gratifying for a moment thy sensual appetite.

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*Prescriptions against Intemperance.*

Oct. 22. **C**ONSIDER first, that in order to overcome the vice of intemperance, one of the first and most necessary prescriptions is to fly the occasions of it, and to keep, as much as possible, at a distance from the danger which is always at hand in the revellings or drinking bouts of worldlings: and ought always to be apprehended in such places and companies where excess is promoted, and encouraged by common practice and example. Let not him that has already experienced his own weakness by falling into sin, in such occasions, venture himself any more there. The burnt child ought to

dread the fire. Much less should he, that has contracted a habit of intemperance, expose himself to such places or companies, whatever the consequence of the refusal may be: he will never get the better of that pernicious habit, as long as he frequents such places and such company. Let no man here deceive himself, with pretexts of civility, or necessity: his soul is at stake; eternity is at stake. O let him not risk his all for fear of displeasing drunken companions! The plague is amongst them: let him fly far away from the infection. The devil is amongst them: there is death in their cups; a mortal poison, that reaches even to the soul. Hell is following them close at the heels; let him keep off from them, lest he also be involved in their destruction.

Consider 2dly, that the arms which are to be employed against the vice of intemperance, are particularly *prayer* and *mortification*. Fervent *prayer*, frequently repeated, draws down the powerful assistance of God's grace, without which, this evil, which is too natural to our corruption, is not to be overcome. And *mortification* disarms the enemy, by restraining the sensual appetite, and bringing it into due order and subjection. Every Christian, as such, ought to aim at leading a *mortified* life; in quality of a disciple of a crucified God; he must endeavour to walk in the *narrow way*, by a general *self-denial*, if he expects to arrive at true life, and would be acknowledged by his Lord and Master for one of his. How much more is every sinner, if he hopes to secure to himself the remission of his sins, by being a penitent indeed, obliged to expiate them by fasting, and other *mortifications* and penitential exercises? Now the putting in practice this *mortification* and *penance*, which is so general a duty, will effectually deliver us from the tyranny of intemperance; and even cut off all the approaches of this enemy. O let us embrace then this happy means of gaining a complete victory over this mortal evil, and all its wretched train of sins!

Consider 3dly, that the most sovereign means of all for subduing intemperance, and indeed all other vices, is a daily application of the soul to the study of *true wisdom*; by the exercise of recollection and mental prayer, and the contemplation of heavenly truths. This helps the soul to another kind of appetite, which will grow daily upon her, for the things of God; and gives her a loathing and disgust for all sensual and carnal satisfactions. The relish of truth, the sweet savour of the heavenly manna, found in the conversation with God in our interior; the consideration and meditation on his eternal feast, where he shall *inebriate* his guests *with the never-failing plenty of his house, and make them drink of the torrent of his pleasure, at the very head of the fountain of life, which is with him*; is abundantly sufficient to wean the soul, that accustoms herself to this kind of diet, from all sensual affections: and to give her an effectual and eternal abhorrence for all those husks of swine, that keep earthly-minded Christians both from the table, and from the kingdom of their heavenly Father.

Conclude to follow these prescriptions, if thou wouldst effectually be preserved from, or cured of, this mortal disease of intemperance. Even in thy ordinary meals, and necessary refreshments, let not sensuality hurry thee away to indulge thyself in eating and drinking, merely for the pleasure of it; but take that necessary support of nature, with a pure intention, in obedience to the will of God, as a medicine for the preserving of thy health; and season it with the remembrance of the gall and vinegar of thy Saviour.

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*On the Vice of Envy.*

Oct. 23. **C**ONSIDER first, that *envy* is a repining, or an uneasiness of mind, at another's good, which the envious man conceives to be an evil to himself, as lessening, or obscuring his glory, or the esteem and excellence which he aims at. So that

envy, though commonly reckoned among the capital sins, because of the many other crimes that spring from it, is indeed a daughter of pride; and, generally speaking, bears her company, and sticks close to this her unhappy mother! 'The proud,' as St. Augustin takes notice, 'through the love they have to their own excelling, envy them that are their equals, because they come up to them; their inferiors, from an apprehension lest they should become their equals; and them that are superior to them, because they cannot equal them.' This envy, like her mother, is a mortal sin, of the spiritual kind, which makes a dreadful havock in the soul; and yet, too often, is scarce taken notice of by the unthinking children of the world. Christians, look well into yourselves, that this devouring serpent may have no lurking hole in your interior, there to prey upon the vitals of your soul. Watch and pray continually against it.

Consider 2dly, that the malignity of envy proceeds from its direct opposition to charity, the queen of all virtues. For charity is a joy in the glory of God, and in the good of our neighbours: whereas envy grieves at both the one and the other. God ought to be glorified for all his gifts and graces, which, with a bountiful hand, he so plentifully bestows upon his creatures. Now the envious man, instead of giving glory to God, on these occasions, is grieved at his goodness, and would willingly, if he could, stop up the channel of his divine bounties: and can there be a greater perversity? Again, the love that we owe to our neighbours, by Christian charity, requires that we should consider their good as our own, since we are to love them as ourselves; and consequently that we should rejoice at their good as at our own: and thus the good Christian meets with daily occasions of satisfaction and joy, in every good thing that befalls any one of his neighbours; because the charity he has for them makes him consider them all as his dear friends and brethren in Christ. But envy



grieves where charity rejoices, and makes its slaves every day more and more miserable, by giving them fresh sadness and pain, as often as they see or hear of any advantage of their neighbours. And is not this again a strange perversity, to prefer sadness before joy, and all the gnawings and gripings of envy before the sweets of charity? But how true it is, that sin can never escape unpunished; since every vice (but more particularly envy) carries with it, even here, its own torment; besides the judgment of hell it shall meet with hereafter. *O thou art just, O Lord, and thy judgment is right!*

Consider 3dly, the malignity of this vice of envy, from its hideous offspring, that is, from the innumerable crimes it gives birth to. Envy is the parent of hatred and malice. The envious are always prone to judge, censure, and condemn their neighbours; to put the worst construction upon all they say or do; and daily to backbite and slander them. They are generally whisperers and tale bearers; seeking, upon every occasion, to set all others against them whom they envy: they ever oppose, both by word and action, whatsoever tends to their good; and take a malicious satisfaction in all the evil that happens to them. And what mischief is there that such a disposition as this is not capable of? Oh! it is true that even the greatest of all crimes have often proceeded from envy. It was envy that made Cain murder his brother Abel: it was envy made the brethren of Joseph sell him into Egypt: it was envy made Saul so often seek the life of David: in fine, it was through envy the Jews crucified the Son of God.

Conclude to detest this monster, with all its imps; and to resist, with all thy power, even the first motions of it. It is a child of the devil, *by whose envy, death, and all other evils, first came into the world;* and who is continually seeking our ruin, through pure envy, without any manner of advantage to himself. *O let us hate and abhor it!*

*Remedies against Envy.*

Oct. 24. **C**ONSIDER first, that in order to subdue effectually the passion of envy, we must lay the axe to the root, by a serious application of our souls to extirpate pride and vain-glory; and all that unhappy self-love which gives birth to this passion, and which continually nourishes it; and to plant in its place the true knowledge of ourselves, and humility. These two blessed virtues always bring along with them light and truth; and easily dispel the darkness and error which serve for a covert for envy. Because the true knowledge of ourselves, and humility, clearly shew how little reason we have to be either conceited of ourselves, or our own excellence; and how groundless and unjust all our pretensions are, either to the favour, or esteem of others, or to any preference before others. Now this conviction makes us willing to be overlooked, and despised by every one; and to sit down in the lowest place, as most suitable to our deserts; and consequently leaves no room for us to repine at any one's being esteemed, or preferred before us, or having any other advantage whatsoever. And thus the light of truth, which humility communicates to the soul, effectually banishes from her this vice of envy, which delights in darkness, and cannot endure the light. If then, my soul, thou wouldst be out of the reach of this hellish monster, learn to be truly humble; for an humble soul can never be envious.

Consider 2dly, that the most sovereign remedy against envy, is to labour to settle the soul in that perfect union, and universal charity, which the Son of God requires of us all, as absolutely necessary to our salvation, and as the true test of our being his disciples. This charity directly attacks the monster, wheresoever it finds it, and gives no quarter to any of its offspring. Wheresoever charity reigns, envy, hatred, malice, backbiting, and all the rest of that cursed train, immediately fly away. O blessed cha-

rity, which bringest along with thee all other virtues and which drivest away all vices ! Come thou, then and take up thy eternal abode in my soul : I know that without thee I am nothing : and that whatsoever other advantages I may possess, if thou art wanting, they will avail me nothing. But all good things will come with thee. O I will seek thee then without ceasing : I will prefer thee before all the treasures of the universe : I will spare no pains to find thee ; nor cost to purchase thee : I will live and die in thy embraces : and thou shalt deliver me from all my vices and passions, and bring me to my God. For my *God is charity.*

Consider 3dly, that envy, like all other vices, is to be overcome by fervent prayer, for imploring the divine assistance, without which we can do nothing : and by serious considerations and meditations upon the great Christian truths : more especially such as may effectually open the eyes of the soul to see the emptiness and vanity of all these worldly toys, and of all earthly and temporal things, which so suddenly vanish away ; and the greatness of things eternal : that so the soul may despise and loathe these lying follies, (the love of which nourishes both envy and pride) and set her heart only upon the eternal honours, riches, and pleasures of the kingdom of heaven ; where envy has no access, and where that perfect charity reigns, which makes the blessed take an inexpressible delight in each other's happiness, to the great increase of their own. O thus it ought to be with all Christians ; since they all aspire to this same heavenly country, the place of everlasting peace and love ; and have all manner of ties to oblige them to the strictest union and love ; as they have all the same father and mother, God and his church ; are all brethren in Christ ; are all redeemed by his blood, and sanctified by his spirit in baptism ; and all partake of his body and blood, the sacrament of unity and love ; and therefore ought all to have but one heart and one soul. O what a heaven should we have

upon earth, if it were so with all Christians ! There would be no occasion for prescriptions against envy.

Conclude to have recourse, upon all occasions, to these three excellent antidotes, humility, charity, and prayer; and the subtle poison of envy shall not have any force upon thee. Oh ! how blind, how unhappy are they, who, through envy, become evil themselves, by occasion of another's good; and are so perverse in their choice, as to prefer the bitterness and racking pains of this vice, before the pleasure and satisfaction of charity.

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*On the Vice of spiritual Sloth.*

Oct. 25. **C**ONSIDER first, that *spiritual sloth* is a most pernicious evil; whether we consider it in a more general acceptation, as it is a laziness of spirit, or a backwardness, negligence, and carelessness, with regard to all the things of God, and all Christian virtues; with a loathing and repugnance to the taking of any pains for the acquisition of them: or, as it is taken by divines, when they number it amongst the seven capital sins, as it is a particular indisposition of the soul, with regard to the love of God, opposite to the virtues of godliness, devotion, and prayer; and a loathing, as it were, of divine love in the soul. The former is a more extensive evil, an enemy to all virtues in general, by opposing them all; and a mother, or nurse, of all other vices, by letting them all in, and nourishing them all in the soul. The latter is particularly opposite to the divine virtue of charity, the queen of all virtues, and to the glory of God's name, and his kingdom in our souls. And therefore, when it is considerable in its kind, it is a great mortal sin; by reason of its direct opposition to divine love, which it banishes from the soul. And no wonder: for if it be a great crime to oppose the spiritual good of our neighbour, by envying, or resisting the reign of the love of God in his soul; it must be no less criminal to withstand and op-

pose the coming of the kingdom of God's grace, and his love into our own souls.

Consider 2dly, the numberless evils that flow from this vice of *spiritual sloth*, when once it possesses the soul; more especially in the way of sins of omission: such as the neglect of prayer, and of all other religious exercises; the keeping away from the sacraments; and consequently the stopping up, or turning off from the soul, all the channels of divine grace; and laying her open, unguarded and defenceless, to all her enemies. And thus the slothful soul is made a daily prey to Satan and to sin; and lives, in a manner, without God. Hence the daughters of this *spiritual sloth*, according to S. Gregory, are 1. *Despair*, or giving up the cause of God and of the soul: so as to have neither hope nor concern for one's eternal salvation. 2. *Pusillanimity*, or cowardice, dreading, or flying from the least pains or labour in the service of God. 3. A *numbness* of soul, with regard to all the divine precepts. 4. *Malice*, or an aversion to all sanctity, and to the professors of it. 5. A *rancour*, or indignation against all such as seek to bring us to God. And lastly, a *dissipation* of mind, turned away from the things of God, and always running after creatures. From the unhappy fruits, you may judge of the naughtiness of the tree which produces them; and learn to dread so pernicious a vice.

Consider 3dly, that this vice of sloth is the more dangerous, because, like the rest of the *spiritual sins*, it lies deeper in the soul, and is easier overlooked, by such as will not take pains to think, and to examine well the state of their interior. *Carnal sins* are more easily discovered; because their guilt carries with it a greater shame in the eyes of men; which makes it fly in the face of the sinner, and he cannot disguise it: but *spiritual sins* are more heinous in the eyes of God, though not so much considered by men; and often not regarded at all. And thus, as thousands live and die under the mortal guilt of the *spiritual*

vices of *pride, envy, hatred, or covetousness*, unregarded and unrepented of: so it is to be feared thousands live and die under the mortal guilt of *spiritual sloth*, unregarded and unrepented of. For what other judgment can we make of those slothful servants, whom the gospel so loudly condemns? Or what can be said in favour of them, who being sent into this world upon no other business but to learn to love and to serve their God, through this unhappy *sloth*, live and die without so much as once seriously thinking upon this great business; much less putting it in execution?

Conclude to look well to thyself, and to examine thyself well, how thy heart stands affected with regard to the glory of God's name, the advancement of his kingdom within thee, and the reign of his love. If this be what thou seekest in the first place, all is well: but if thou admittest of a loathing or repugnance to this, and givest the preference in thy heart to every thing else; assure thyself that the demon of spiritual sloth possesses thy soul, and that God has no share in thee.

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*On the Remedies against spiritual Sloth.*

Oct. 26. **C**ONSIDER first, that the sovereign remedy against spiritual sloth, is the daily practice of consideration; particularly by meditating on those moving truths which either represent to us the infinite goodness of our God, his love for us, the passion of his Son, and those innumerable motives we have to love him, and to be fervent in his service: or else denounce to us his many judgments, both in time and eternity, upon the obstinate opposers of his grace, and the rebels to his love. O what heart can be so far hardened by sloth, as to stand out against such meditations as these, when frequently repeated! We have a God to serve, and a soul to save. This God is infinitely good, and good to us. He is all goodness, beauty, truth, and all perfection: he is infinitely lovely; and he is our

ancient and eternal lover: his Son came down from heaven for the love of us: he employed his whole life in seeking our salvation: he even died for the love of us: we have received, and daily do receive many great benefits from him: his thought his always upon us. And shall not the consideration of all this goodness and love of his for us, oblige us to be fervent in the love of him, and diligent in his service? If we love him, and serve him as we ought, he will be our *protector* here, and our *reward exceeding great* hereafter. If we neglect his love and service, he threatens us with eternal evils; and death, judgment, and hell, are always following us at our heels. And shall not the remembrance of all his promises on the one hand, and of all his threats and judgments on the other, effectually rouse us up out of our slothful indolence, and spur us on to labour in earnest for the securing our eternity?

Consider 2dly, that another remedy against sloth, is often to reflect that the short time of this life is given us by our Maker for nothing else but to labour therein, and to labour for an eternity; that we can have no other stock to live on for eternity but what we provide, and send before us, by working well during the twelve hours of this short day of our mortal life: that every moment of this time is precious; it is even worth an eternity; because by the good employment of every moment, we may add to our eternal stock; and consequently to our eternal glory: that what we lose of it by sloth, is lost for ever; and that the loss is irreparable: that the night will be quickly with us, in which no man can work; and therefore that we must husband well this short, this precious time, and spend it to the best advantage: *labouring by good works to make our calling and election sure*, 2 Peter i. 10. Oh! what a strict account shall one day be demanded of us, of the employment of this whole time? And where shall the slothful hide their heads at that day!

Consider 3dly, and set often before your eyes, in

order to overcome all spiritual sloth, the life and death of the Son of God, the great pattern of a Christian; who was never idle; but always employed in doing the will of his Father. O how happy is the Christian, that endeavours to be always employed in this manner! Read also, and meditate often on the lives of the saints, and excite yourselves to fervour in the service of God, by their example, and by the consideration of their eternal glory. O what pains do the children of this world daily take, what dangers do they expose themselves to, for the sake of a little dirt, which they must leave behind them to-morrow? And is it not a shame, that Christians should not do as much for a happy eternity? Remember also, on all occasions, that the eye of your great Master is always upon you: and therefore take care to please him, not only by ever doing something, because such is his will and appointment; but also by labouring to perform all your actions with that perfection, which becomes works done for the service of so great a King.

Conclude to arm thyself, by these and such like considerations, against all the mischiefs, that are otherwise to be apprehended, from this pernicious vice of spiritual sloth: and that thou mayest keep thyself further off from its approaches, beware of all tepidity or lukewarmness in the service of God. Often reflect upon the sentence that was passed upon the barren fig-tree, (*Luke xiii.*) and fear, lest if thou also content thyself with a shew of leaves, without bearing good fruit, the Lord of the vineyard may order thee also to be cut up, and cast into the fire.

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*On the Christian's Warfare.*

Oct. 27. **C**ONSIDER first, that the life of a good Christian is a perpetual warfare, according to that of holy Job, *the life of man upon earth is a warfare*, Job vii. 1. His *time of a true, settled, and solid peace*, is not to come, till after



many a victory. He must fight his way to heaven, against a set of cruel, deceitful, and obstinate enemies, who will never let him alone, either in life or death. These are they, of whom the apostle writes, (Eph. vi. 11, 12.) *Put you on the armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the deceits of the devil. For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood; but against principalities and powers; against the rulers of the world of this darkness; against the spirits of wickedness in high places:* that is, against all the legions of demons who dwell in this air that surrounds us. These wicked spirits mortally hate us, because we were created to fill up the places they have forfeited by sin; and therefore they never cease to employ a thousand tricks and artifices, a thousand snares and allurements, to draw us away from God, into the pit of sin and damnation. But for our comfort, their power is greatly restrained; they can employ no force against us, nor do us any real hurt at all, except it be by our own free consent, by our unhappily yielding ourselves to them. And on the other hand, we have a far greater strength engaged to fight on our side: not only of all the host of heaven, ever ready to guard and defend us; but even of the King of heaven himself, whose battles we are fighting, and who never forsakes his soldiers in the war, if they do not first desert from him. And what can the soldiers of Christ desire more? God is for us: what matter is it then who is against us? We are sure of victory, if we do not fling down our arms, and desert to the enemy.

Consider 2dly, that the *devil*, and all his wicked ones, knowing how little they can do against us of themselves, have unhappily engaged *the world* and *the flesh* to side with them, as auxiliaries in this warfare. Upon these they depend more than upon all their own troops; and these, in effect, annoy us more, and commonly do much more mischief to our souls, than all those spirits of darkness. By *the world*, we mean the whole collection of poor mortals, who have

been already deluded by Satan into the broad road of sin and perdition; and who have embraced, both in principles and practice, the wicked laws, maxims, and customs which he has introduced; and continually propagate them, both by word and example. This is that *world*, the slave of Satan, and the mortal enemy of the gospel of Christ, against which he so often pronounces his woes: this is that Babylon, the city of the devil, that is waging war against the people of God; and seeking to carry them away captives, and to subject them to its wicked laws. This wicked *world* is made up of the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, 1 *John* ii. 16. This wicked world, and all its pomps, we have renounced at our baptism. Against this capital enemy of our souls we must fight till death.

Consider *Sdly*, that if the *world* be a dangerous enemy to a Christian soul, because it requires great courage and strength to go against the current of all its maxims and practices, and to despise both its allurements, and its censures; the flesh, on the other hand, is still more difficult to overcome, because it is a domestic enemy, that is always at hand; even within this very castle of ours, which is continually besieged by the devil and the world; it is a traitor, that holds a perpetual correspondence with these enemies, and is ever ready to open the gates of the soul to them. For by *the flesh* we mean, our own evil inclinations, passions, and lusts; which never cease to wage war against the spirit; and which violently incline us to take part with the devil and the world against our God. Hence our Lord, in his gospel, not only requires that we should renounce all other things in the world, how near or dear soever they may be to us, to follow him; but more especially inculcates, that we must renounce also ourselves, and hate ourselves in this life, if we desire to be his disciples, and to save our souls. This then is the very chief part of the Christian's warfare; to fight

continually against ourselves, and to spare no pains to subdue our own flesh, that is, all our corrupt inclinations and passions.

Conclude to declare an eternal war against all these three enemies, and to fight manfully against them till death: and thou shalt not fail to receive the crown of life.

*On SS. Simon and Jude.*

Oct. 28. **C**ONSIDER first, the wonders of God, in these, and in all the rest of the apostles; whom he raised up as it were from the earth, and from the dunghill, and made the princes of his people. *The foolish things of the world hath God chosen, saith St. Paul, (1 Cor. i. 27, 28, 29.) that he may confound the wise: and the weak things of the world hath God chosen, that he may confound the strong: and the base things of the world, and the things that are contemptible hath God chosen, that no flesh should glory in his sight.* The apostles, when they were chosen by Christ, were poor, and contemptible in the eyes of the world; they were ignorant and illiterate: they had no power, credit, or interest, to recommend them; nor any of those qualities which the world is fond of to make them shine in the eyes of men; and yet they are preferred by the wisdom of God, before all the wise, rich, eloquent, learned, noble, or great ones of this world, as most fit to be his instruments in this great work of the conversion of the world, and best qualified by their simplicity, and humility, to shew forth his glory. Adore here, my soul, the wonderful ways of God, and learn to prefer with him the things that this world despises, before all its false grandeur, deceitful appearances, and ostentation of wisdom.

Consider 2dly, the eminent dignity to which the apostles were raised by our Lord: they were made his disciples, his individual companions, his familiar friends and confidants; yea his brethren too, (*John xx. 17.*) they were made, under him, the chief

priests of the New Testament, the first bishops and pastors of his church, the prime ministers of his kingdom, the stewards and dispensers of all his mysteries ; his ambassadors to men ; his vicegerents upon earth ; the doctors and teachers of the whole world ; and, next after him, who is the chief cornerstone, the twelve foundations of his church, (*Eph. ii. 20.*) yea the twelve foundations of the heavenly Jerusalem, *Apoc. xxi. 14.* Reflect also on the distinguishing graces, and the excellency of power, which our Lord conferred upon them, suitable to their great office and callings ; such as the power of consecrating, and of offering in sacrifice his sacred body and blood ; of remitting sins ; and of opening or shutting heaven's gates to men ; the commission of feeding his flock, and of ruling and directing his church, with the promise of the Holy Ghost to assist them therein ; the authority of publishing through the whole world his new law, the law of grace ; and the covenant of salvation through him, &c. Besides the gifts of tongues and prophecy, and other eminent graces of the Holy Ghost ; and a power of working all kind of miracles, yea even greater than those of Christ himself, *St. John xiv. 12.* Christians, bless your Saviour on the festivals of the apostles, for all these great things he has done for them, and through them, for his church in general, and, in some degree, for every one of you in particular. For as they were, under Christ, the fathers and founders of the Christian religion, so from them, through their ministry, the faith, the word, the sacraments, the graces of Christ, and all the spiritual goods and treasures, are derived down to your souls, by the channel of their successors in the church of Christ.

Consider 3dly, the eminent sanctity of the apostles, on account of which they have been so highly honoured by all succeeding generations in the Christian church. They received great graces, and they faithfully co-operated with these graces : at the first

call, they left all things else to follow Christ, and, as he bears them witness, (*Luke xx. 28.*) they *remained with him in his temptations.* They were indefatigable in their labours, for the propagating of his kingdom, and for the salvation of souls: their zeal and courage was invincible: their love for him was stronger than death: they were ready to meet with death, in every shape, for his glory: they even rejoiced that they were esteemed worthy to suffer for his name. In a word, they were perfect, in an eminent degree, in all virtues. By their preaching and labours, by their doctrine and miracles, by their sufferings and death, they planted the faith and church of Christ throughout the world: but nothing contributed more to this great work than the sanctity of their lives: by the help of which, as well as by the fervour and efficacy of their prayers, they effectually established virtue, religion, and Christian perfection, in every place where they came, upon the ruins of infidelity and vice, and left behind them a succession of saints, as the fruits of their labours; which has been kept up ever since in the true church of Christ: according to that of their divine Master, (*John xv. 16.*) *I have appointed you that you should go, and should bring forth fruit, and your fruit should remain.*

Conclude to celebrate, with a particular devotion, the festivals of the apostles, as the most eminent amongst the favourites of God, and the fathers of the other saints. Glorify God, who is wonderful in all his saints, for the extraordinary wonders he has wrought in them, and through them; and for that eternal glory to which he has raised them. But study also to learn the great lessons they perpetually taught, both by word and work, and to aim with all your power at an imitation of their virtues and sanctity.

*On the Christian's Armour.*

Oct. 29. **C**ONSIDER first, that the life of a Christian here upon earth being a perpetual warfare, he is under the necessity of providing himself with proper armour, if he hopes to come off with victory. What this armour should be, we may learn from the apostle, Eph. vi. 13. *Take unto you, saith he, the armour of God, that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and to stand in all things perfect. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breast-plate of justice; and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace, in all things taking the shield of faith, wherewith you may be able to extinguish all the fiery darts of the most wicked one. And take unto you the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the spirit (which is the word of God) by all prayer and supplication praying at all times in the spirit, and in the same watching with all instance, &c.* O how completely shall that Christian be armed against all his enemies, that makes such a provision for himself as is here recommended by the apostle, of arms, both defensive, and offensive? Let us descend to each particular.

Consider therefore 2dly, that the soldier of Christ, in order to be fit to put on his armour, and to stand in the battle, without being hindered by his earthly garments hanging loose about him, must first *gird up his loins*; that is, he must set out, with a firm resolution of restraining his passions and lusts, and all irregular affections to these earthly things, which very much encumber and hinder the Christian in his spiritual conflicts, and give the enemy a great hold of him; now the *girdle* or belt he must make use of for this end, is *truth*; for he must be *girt about with truth*, says the apostle: that is, with sincerity, uprightness, Christian simplicity, and purity of intention, in his undertaking; having purely in view God and his soul, and being resolved at all events to fight till death, and to sacrifice on all oc-

casions his dearest inclinations to the love of God, and the salvation of his soul. Thus must he begin, and then proceed to *put on the breast-plate*, or coat of mail, of Christian *justice*; by which is here understood, not one particular virtue, but the collection of them all; which the soldier of Christ must labour to furnish himself with, against the temptations of all their opposite vices. He must also have his *feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace*. But what is meant by this? The *feet* of the soul are her affections, by which she moves towards the things she loves. These, in the Christian soldier, must be properly *shod, with the preparation*, that is, with the readiness and promptitude of the soul, to direct all her steps, not towards the lying vanities and fooleries of the world, in which there is *no peace*; but to walk in the ways of the *gospel*, which alone can ensure to us any true *peace*, either for time or eternity.

Consider 3dly, that after these previous dispositions, and general preparations for the spiritual warfare, the apostle recommends as the chief pieces of the Christian armour, *the shield of faith*, which has a particular efficacy to *extinguish all the fiery darts* levelled at us by the wicked one; and *the helmet of salvation*, that is, divine hope, which protects the head of the soul from being wounded by any of his weapons. Yes, Christians, if you would keep your souls from being pierced with the hellish darts of Satan, you must take care to carry about with you the *shield of faith*; that is, a strong and lively belief of the great truths of the gospel; with a sense of the presence of God; and a remembrance of death, judgment, heaven, and hell, and you shall be out of their reach. But then you must also provide yourselves with the *helmet of hope*, by joining an absolute distrust in yourselves, with an entire confidence in God: lest otherwise your head be left naked and exposed on all sides to the wounds of the enemy, and there be no soundness in it: which is the case of all

those, who in this kind of warfare build upon themselves, and not upon our Lord.

Conclude to spare no pains to procure every part of this heavenly armour; that you may be able to fight the battles of your Lord, in such manner as to overcome his and your enemies, and to triumph eternally with him. Especially take care to secure to yourselves the *shield* of a *lively faith*, by the means of daily meditation on the truths of eternity.

*On the Christian's Conflict.*

Oct. 30. **C**ONSIDER first, that in this spiritual warfare, the Christian soldier must not only be furnished with arms of defence, such as breast plate, shield, and helmet, but he also must provide himself with a proper sword, with which he may be able to attack, and to beat down the enemy. Now this *sword of the spirit*, or spiritual sword, to be employed in the Christian's conflict, is, according to the apostle, the *word of God*. The truths of *God's heavenly word*, heard from his ministers, or read in good books, and received as the seed of life, and laid up in the heart, when embraced with a lively faith, and pondered at leisure by deep meditation, serve in a double capacity, both to defend us, and to annoy the enemy: they are both *a shield*, and *a sword*. They are a shield, because the continual remembrance of these great truths baffles and defeats all the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil: none of them have any force against a soul that daily meditates on God's holy word, and enters into the true spirit of it. And they are a sword too, which none of them all can withstand, when drawn against them, by a lively faith: it attacks them wherever it meets them, and never fails of victory; it beats down all their fortifications, and forces them out of all their entrenchments. Such is the efficacy of daily meditation on divine truths; it roots out all vices, and establishes all virtues.

Consider 2dly, that in the Christian's conflict,



this *sword of the spirit* is to be used, according to the apostle, in such manner as to be accompanied with *all prayer and supplication, praying at all times in the spirit, and in the same watching with instance.* From which words we gather the great importance, yea the absolute necessity of fervent prayer in this our spiritual warfare : and that, not only in the time of more dangerous and obstinate temptations, but, as he says, *at all times, and with instance.* Oh ! it is the want of observing this prescription makes so many shamefully yield in the time of temptation. And indeed we may say with absolute truth, that no one is ever overcome, but for want of prayer ; and that a neglect of prayer is the original cause of the fall of all them, that fall from God by sin : for his infinite goodness never forsakes them that do not first forsake him ; he never withdraws his grace from them that do not first withdraw themselves from his grace : he *is faithful, and will not suffer us to be tempted above our strength ;* but will assuredly give us the victory, if we always cast ourselves upon him by fervent and humble prayer.

Consider 3dly, that the Apostle prescribes to the Christian soldier, in order to overcome the enemy, to join *watching* with his prayer : agreeably to the doctrine of our Redeemer ; who on many occasions, enjoins to all his followers a perpetual watchfulness ; and in particular, the night before his passion, bid his disciples *watch and pray, lest they should enter into temptation,* (Matt. xxiv. 41.) clearly intimating by these words, that our best and only security against being overcome by temptation, is to join *watching* with *prayer* ; and to oppose these two against all our spiritual enemies ; ever remembering, that though our *spirit be willing, the flesh is frail.* And what makes this *watching* still more necessary, is the nature of this warfare, in which we are engaged against these wicked spirits, who are continually laying ambushes for us ; and use a thousand deceits to ensnare us ; and oftener prevail by tricks

and stratagems, or by coming upon us unawares, than by open assault.

Conclude to make proper use of these weapons, prescribed by the apostle, and by our Lord himself, by filling thy mind with *the word*, and the truths of *God*, and by diligence in *watching* and *praying*: and all thy conflicts shall be crowned with victory.

*On the four Cardinal Virtues:*

Oct. 31. **C**ONSIDER first, that there are four moral virtues, which are called *cardinal*; because they are as it were *hinges*, upon which the whole life of a Christian must constantly move, if he would be good for any thing. These are *prudence*, *justice*, *fortitude*, and *temperance*: which the wise man tells us, (*Wisd. viii. 7.*) are all taught by Divine Wisdom, and *are such things as men can have nothing more profitable in life*. All other moral virtues have a necessary dependance on these four: they all fall to the ground without them. Every virtue must be *prudent* and discreet, in all it takes in hand, otherwise it degenerates into vice: every virtue must be *just*, by rendering on all occasions what is due to God, to ourselves, and to our neighbours. Every virtue must be *stout* and *valiant*, firm and constant, in adhering to what is right, and opposing what is wrong. And every virtue must be sober and *temperate*, lest it exceed the bounds of due moderation, prescribed by right reason and religion. But O what treasures of virtues do they possess, that have acquired these four principal ones! These will effectually arm them against all vices.

Consider 2dly, that Christian *prudence* is a virtue which teaches us in all things what is good, and what is evil; what is right, and what is wrong; and what ought to be done, and what ought to be left undone, in all the occurrences of life. It is a virtue that directs all our words and actions in such a manner, as that we neither decline out of the way, or offend ourselves, nor give occasion to others to offend;

but ever setting before our eyes our great business and last end, make always a proper choice of the means that are to bring us to this great end, and apply them accordingly. It is a virtue that directs all other virtues, conducting them all by the royal middle way of our great King, that they may not go aside by excess, or defect, either to the right hand, or to the left. The offices of this great virtue are, to design and *consult well*, to *judge right*, and to *direct well the execution*, of what has been rightly concerted, and judged to be proper. In all which it is helped indeed, by the *remembrance* of things past, by the *understanding* of things present, by the *forecasting* of things to come, by reasoning, attention, caution, and circumspection; but all this with dependance on divine grace, and not on one's own industry; and with a continual application to our Lord, by frequent and fervent prayer, for his light and assistance, without which our prudence will avail us nothing.

Consider 3dly, the offices of the three other cardinal virtues, and the excellence of them. *Justice* renders to every one his due, and wrongs no one. It teaches to restrain every thought, every desire, every act of the will, every judgment, every word, every action, and every omission too, that any ways tend to injure one's neighbour, or that does not rightly square with that great principle of morality, *Do as thou wouldst be done by*. And with regard to God, (who has the most undoubted right, by all manner of titles, to our whole being, and to all our service) it obliges us, before all things, to dedicate our whole hearts and souls to him by worship and love. Then *fortitude* arms the soul with invincible courage in her warfare against her spiritual enemies, and gives her strength and constancy to enable her to overcome all fear or dread of all those evils which she may be exposed to in her mortal pilgrimage, for doing her duty; and resolution to suffer every thing rather than to sin. Lastly, *temperance* restrains all

immoderation in eating or drinking, with all other excesses of our passions or lusts; and all that any ways carries us out of the due bounds, prescribed either by right reason, and the law of nature, or by the precepts of God, or of them that have their authority from him, in the employments or functions of any of our senses, whether exterior or interior. See, my soul, how admirable are all these virtues! O there is not a day, there is scarce an hour of thy mortal life, in which thou dost not stand in need of them all.

Conclude to esteem and desire, love and seek, all these blessed virtues. O spare no pains to acquire them; they are richly worth all thy labour. But ever remember whose gifts they are, and that they must come to thee by fervent prayer. All thy labour, without this, will be labour in vain.

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*On the Feast of all the Saints.*

Nov. 1. **C**ONSIDER first, that, on this day, the Church of God honours with a solemn festival the virtues, the triumphs, and the eternal glory of all the saints and citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem. First, in order to give glory, praise, and thanksgiving, on their occasion, to the God of all the saints, and to his Son Jesus Christ, the author of all their virtues, of all their triumphs, and of all their glory; and to honour the Lord in his saints. Secondly, to encourage all her children to follow the glorious example of the saints, and to walk in their blessed footsteps, in hopes of arriving one day at their happy company. Thirdly, to teach them to associate themselves in the mean time to the saints, by a holy *communion* with them; and to procure the assistance of their prayers and intercession. O how just, how pious, how wholesome it is, to glorify God in his saints, who are the most excellent of all his works: to honour in them the bright trophies of the blood of Christ: to learn of them the practice of all Christian virtues, and especially of divine

love ; and to be admitted to a share in their powerful prayers : and to a happy communion with them in all that is good ! *You are come*, says the apostle, (*Hebr. xii. 22. &c.*) speaking to the children of the church, *to Mount Sion, and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to the company of many thousands of angels ; and to the church of the first-born, who are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of the just made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the New Testament, &c.* O happy communion indeed ! O joyful festivity, in which the church militant solemnly associates herself with the whole church triumphant, in the worship, praise, and love of their common Lord, through him that is the Mediator of them both, and through the great sacrifice of his blood ! See, then, my soul, what ought to be thy devotion on this day.

Consider 2dly, on occasion of this festival, what encouragements we here meet with, to dedicate ourselves in good earnest to the holy service of our God, when we reflect on that *eternal weight of glory* in heaven, with which he rewards the light and momentary labours and sufferings of his servants here upon earth. All these holy ones, whose feast we celebrate this day, are entered into the never-ending joys of their Lord at a very cheap and easy rate. The yoke of his divine servitude, which they bore for the short time of their pilgrimage, was very *sweet* to them, and their *burthen* was ever *light*. Grace and love made all things easy, that they either did or suffered for their beloved. He himself supported them in such a manner, as to carry, as it were, both them and their crosses too upon his own shoulders. He never left them, in life or death, till he took them to himself in his heavenly kingdom ; where they shall live and reign for ever with him. My soul, hast not thou the same God as they had ? hast not thou the same Saviour, Jesus Christ, who has purchased the same kingdom for thee also, with his own most precious

blood? Hast thou not the same sacraments and sacrifice, and all the same helps, and means of grace, as they had? Is the arm of God shortened? Or is the source of his infinite mercy dried up, or diminished? Why then mayest not thou also aspire to the same glory and happiness? The saints carried about with them heretofore the like flesh and blood as thou now dost: but their correspondence with the mercy and grace of God raised them up from the dunghill of their corrupt nature, and made them saints: the like correspondence with the divine mercy and grace can do as much for thee also: O why then shouldst not thou also endeavour to be a saint.

Consider 3dly, that as it is the love of God which makes saints, so it is this divine love which we particularly honour in all the saints. It is this heavenly love, which ought to be the great object of our attention, of our devotion, and of our imitation, on all the festivals of these generous lovers, and beloved of God; and more especially on this day, when we celebrate the virtues of them all under one solemnity. O what strong invitations, what great encouragements have we here: what pressing calls to labour to sanctify our souls with divine love; when we have here set before our eyes all these millions of heavenly lovers, whom we honour in this festivity? This blessed Virgin, *the queen and mother of beautiful love*; these innumerable legions of angelic spirits, these cherubims and seraphims, all on fire with love; these patriarchs and prophets, constant and faithful lovers of their God; these apostles of the Lamb, sent by him to spread through all the earth the bright flames of love, which he sent down upon them from heaven; these armies of martyrs, all victims of love, who all laid down their lives for love; these millions of holy confessors, and all these *spirits of the just made perfect* by love, who, both in life and death, have been always true friends and servants of divine love, and now, for all eternity, shall shine

and burn in its beautiful flames; all these virigins, in fine, the spouses of love, whose love for the Lamb was stronger than death, and who now follow him singing hymns of eternal love, wheresoever he goes. O let us draw near to this great fire, to this heavenly company of seraphic lovers; that our frozen hearts may receive some small heat at least from all their flames!

Conclude ever to love, honour, and imitate the Saints of God: but more especially to love in them what God loves in them; that is, the gifts of his divine grace; amongst which, the most excellent is love. Thus shalt thou be best entitled both to the intercession of the Saints at present, and to their happy society hereafter.

*On the Commemoration of all Souls.*

Nov. 2. **C**ONSIDER first, that on this day, the church of God, attending to the necessities of great numbers of her children who are departed out of this life in her faith or communion, but not without some blemish of sin in their souls; some lesser stains at least, of *idle words*, or other venial offences; some *wood, hay, or stubble* in their building, which cannot stand the fire; or some debt to divine justice, on account of former sins, not sufficiently expiated by penance; turns all her prayers and sacrifices towards the procuring for them, from the mercy of God, through the merits of the precious blood of Jesus Christ her spouse, the remission of all their sins, and their speedy admission into the happy regions of eternal rest, light, and peace, in the company of the Saints. O, my soul, how *holy and wholesome* is the institution of this day of expiation! O how full of piety and charity is this apostolical tradition, this religious practice of the church of God in all ages, to *pray for the dead, that they may be loosed from their sins!* 2 Machab. xxii. 46. Alas! how few depart this life so *pure*, as to be immediately admitted to that blessed city above, where *nothing defiled*

can enter in! Revel. xxi. 2. How few are fit to fly up to the embraces of the God of all purity, without some purgation after death! It is then a duty of Christian charity, incumbent on all the children of the church of Christ, to assist by their prayers their brethren that are gone before them, that they may be discharged from their sins, and may rest in peace.

Consider 2dly, that this kind of charity is highly pleasing to God, is very beneficial to the souls of the faithful departed, and is very wholesome to our own souls. The spiritual works of mercy are of all the most acceptable to God, the lover of souls. Now this is one of the spiritual works of mercy: it far exceeds all the corporal works of mercy: it tends to feed those souls that are hungry, with the plenty of God's house; to bring them to quench their thirst at the fountain of life: to cloath them with immortal glory; to comfort and refresh them under their pains and sufferings; to loose their bands; to deliver them out of their prison; and to help them forward to their eternal home, which they so ardently long for. Now all this is most agreeable to the Father of mercies, who has a most tender love for these his children. It is doing these souls of our brethren the greatest charity imaginable; by contributing all that is in our power to deliver them from all their evils, and to bring them to their sovereign good. And it is at the same time a most excellent means of obtaining mercy for ourselves also, whilst we shew this mercy to them; for the merciful shall obtain mercy, Matt. xi. 7. It is making to ourselves friends, . . . who when we fail may receive us into everlasting habitations. Luke xvi. 9.

Consider 3dly, that this charity which we owe to the souls of the faithful departed, is not only exercised by praying for them; but also by fasting, or other penitential austerities, offered up to God in their behalf for the remission of their sins; as likewise by almsdeeds, performed with the like intention,



according to the religious custom of former ages, and the practice of our pious ancestors, in their doles at the funerals of the dead. But the most effectual means of all to purge them from their sins, and to bring them to their God, is the offering up for them the great sacrifice of the body and blood of Christ; and presenting to God, in their favour, that most sacred victim, by which was cancelled *the handwriting which was against us*; and a general atonement was made for all our sins. In the old law, the high priest, once a year, *viz.* on the solemn feast of expiation (*Levit. xvi.*) carried the blood of victims into the sanctuary, to make atonement for the sins of the people: but this was but a figure of what is done by our high priest; who is gone once for all into the sanctuary of heaven; not with the blood of goats or calves, but with his own most sacred blood, shed here upon earth for our sins; and now ceases not to exhibit the same to his Father, both by himself, in heaven, where he makes continual intercession for us; and here by his ministers, in the sacred mysteries. This blood pleads strongly for the remission of sins: this is the source of all mercy and grace: this is plentifully applied to the souls, both of the living and the dead, by the great sacrifice of the altar.

Conclude to assist, to the best of thy power, the souls of the faithful departed, both by prayers, alms, and this holy oblation of the blood of Christ. Thy charity for them may stand thee in great stead, when their case shall come to be thy own. But remember withal, that the best thing thou canst do is to work now all thou canst for thyself, whilst thou hast time; and to do full penance for thy sins in this life, that thy soul may not stand in need of these helps hereafter.

*On the Obligation of all Christians to be Saints.*

Nov. 3. **C**ONSIDER first, how often God has declared, in his word, that all his people ought to be Saints. *Be you holy, because I the Lord your God am holy*, was what he perpetually inculcated in the Old Testament: and in the New, the Son of God calls upon us all, *Matt. v. 48. Be you perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect.* All Christians are called to be Saints (Rom. i. 7.); to be holy, and without blemish, in the sight of God in charity (Eph. i. 4.); a chosen generation, a kingly priesthood, a holy nation, a purchased people, 1 Pet. ii. 9. Hence the name of Saints is appropriated by St. Paul to all Christians; as if it were the same thing to be a Christian, and to be a Saint: which shews that, according to the doctrine of the apostle, all Christians, as such, are at least obliged to endeavour to be Saints. This obligation is grounded, upon the sanctity of the God, whom we serve; of the gospel law, under which we live; of the holy institute, which we profess; of the great master, whom we follow; of the divine sacrifice and sacraments, which we frequent; and of that sacred dedication and consecration, by which God has sanctified our souls for himself. O let us never forget the many motives we have to be Saints!

Consider 2dly, that our being Saints is not merely a matter of counsel, or of greater perfection; it is a strict commandment; it is implied in the very first and chiefest of all God's commandments. For though all are not commanded to work miracles; nor to exercise extraordinary austerities; nor to retire into deserts, to spend their whole time there in prayer; nor to sell all they have, and give it to the poor, &c. (for there have been many very great Saints that have done none of these things): yet all are commanded to *love God with their whole heart, and with their whole soul, and with their whole mind, and with their whole strength.* Now this it is that makes Saints: and this

is of strict obligation for all. Do this, my soul: keep this commandment; and thou also shalt be a Saint: but without this, none of those other things, nor all of them together, can make any one a Saint. Christians, reflect on the perfection and sanctity which is required of you all by this great commandment of divine love. *To love the Lord our God with our whole heart, and all its affections; with our whole soul, and all its powers; with our whole mind, by directing all our thoughts to him; and with our whole strength, by dedicating to him all our actions.* O this is to be Saints indeed! Now this our God calls for; and nothing less will satisfy him. It is the very first of his commandments.

Consider 3dly, upon how many titles this great God challenges our whole hearts and souls, by love and service; and consequently that we should be truly Saints; that is, a people sanctified, and consecrated to him. 1. We are his *children*; and therefore ought to bear some resemblance with our Father, by an imitation of his sanctity. 2. Our souls are *espoused* to him, and aspire to an eternal union with him: now whatsoever is disagreeable to true sanctity defiles the soul, and disqualifies her for that happy union. 3. We are his *temples*: the temples of God must be *ever holy*. 4. We are the *members* of Jesus Christ; we are ingrafted in him; we are to live by his spirit, which is the spirit of sanctity. 5. We absolutely belong to God, by our creation; he gave us our being, and gave it for no other end but that we should be Saints. 6. The Son of God delivered himself up for us, by his passion and death, that he might *wash us from all our sins, in his own blood, and make us a kingdom and priests* (that is Saints) *to God and his Father*, Apoc. i. 5, 6. In fine, by our baptismal vows; by our dedication to God at that time; by our frequent participation of the body and blood of Christ in the divine sacrament; in consequence of which we ought *to abide in Christ*, the

God of all sanctity, and live by him: and by innumerable other titles we belong to God; and are strictly obliged to give our whole selves up, without reserve, to him; to *serce him in holiness and justice all the days of our life.* And shall not all this convince us of the necessity of our labouring in earnest to be Saints: and that this is both the will and the commandment of God?

Conclude to begin, from this very hour, a new and saintly life; by yielding thyself up a perpetual servant to divine love, and striving henceforward to make a daily progress in this heavenly virtue: this is the shortest and surest way to all sanctity and perfection.

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*On the Means we all have to become Saints.*

Nov. 4. **C**ONSIDER first, that if our Lord calls upon us all to be Saints, and even commands us all to be Saints; he that never commands impossibilities, furnishes us also with the means, which, if we make good use of, will make us Saints. Witness, those manifold graces, and spiritual helps, which he continually favours us with; which if we duly corresponded with, we should all be Saints. Witness that early knowledge he has given us of his heavenly truths; and those repeated invitations with which he sweetly presses us to turn from our sins, and to come to him. O if we did but welcome these first divine calls, how quickly would they produce in our souls strong desires of dedicating ourselves in good earnest to divine love! Now such strong desires as these are the beginning of true wisdom, and the very foundation of all sanctity. For since God desires we should be Saints, if we also sincerely desire it, the work will be done. Strong desires will make us earnest in prayer; they will make us diligent and fervent in all spiritual exercises. Strong desires will make us labour in earnest: we shall spare no pains in the acquisition of virtues, if our desires are strong indeed. Such desires as these

are that *hunger and thirst after justice*, recommended by our Lord, which never fails of being *filled*, *Matt. v. 6.* - O who can complain of wanting the means to become a Saint, when strong desires may do the work !

Consider 2dly, the many particular helps for sanctity which we meet with every where in the church of God : which, as they have already made many great Saints, in every state and condition of life ; are capable of doing as much for us ; and will not fail of doing it, if we are not wanting to God, and to ourselves, by the abuse or neglect of them. Such are the sacraments, those conduits of divine grace, instituted by Jesus Christ on purpose to make us Saints. Such, in particular, is that most holy sacrament, and divine sacrifice, of the body and blood of Christ ; in which we have always amongst us, and may daily approach to, the very fountain of all sanctity. Oh ! my soul, one good and perfect communion may suffice to make thee a Saint. Such again is the word of God, which is so often preached to us, or read by us : the truths of eternity, so often set before us : the gospel of Jesus Christ : the lives of the Saints : the great examples of the living servants of God : the mysteries relating to our redemption, which we so often celebrate in the public worship of the church, in such manner, as to make them as it were present to the eyes of our souls : with abundance of other spiritual advantages which are continually found in the communion of the true church of Christ. O, Christians, let us never complain of our wanting the means to become Saints, when we have so many powerful graces and helps always at hand ! If we are not Saints, it must be entirely our own fault. And, what an account shall we have one day to give for all these graces and helps, if we do not make good use of them !

Consider 3dly, that in order to be Saints, nothing is required on our parts, but what God on his part will make sweet and easy to us : *for his yoke is sweet,*

*and his burthen is light.* We may apply to his commandment of our being Saints, what is written Deut. xxx. 11, &c. *This commandment that I command thee this day, is not above thee, nor far off from thee: nor is it in heaven, that thou shouldst say, which of us can go up to heaven, to bring it to us: . . . nor is it beyond the sea, that thou mayest excuse thyself, and say, which of us can cross the sea, and bring it. . . . But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it.* Yes, Christians, our God is very near us: he is in the very centre of our souls. With him are all the treasures of grace and sanctity; with him is the law of love, he is all love: he is a consuming fire, the property of which is to destroy all our vices, and to transform our souls into himself. He is the inexhaustible source of all our good. We have no need then to go far to find divine love, which makes Saints; since we have the very source of it within us: it is but turning into our own interior, by the diligent practice of recollection and mental prayer, and there we shall quickly meet with our God, and with his love; which will make all duties, and all labours sweet and easy to us. This is the shortest way to all good, and the most effectual means to make us Saints.

Conclude to embrace, and put in practice all these means of sanctity, which divine providence continually present thee with. Open the door of thy heart to every grace with which God visits thee; and cooperate with it to the full extent of thy power. Nourish in thy soul a great desire, a perfect hunger and thirst after the love of God, and all Christian perfection. Meditate often; read good books; be fervent in prayer, and in frequenting the sacraments. But particularly aim at a spirit of recollection, and a continual attention to God, in thy own interior; and frequent aspirations of love; and thou shalt quickly become a Saint.

*On the Perfection of our ordinary Actions.*

Nov. 5. **C**ONSIDER first, the error of a great many Christians, in placing sanctity in such things as indeed are no part of it. Thus some suppose that in order to be a Saint, one must work miracles; now St. John Baptist was one of the greatest of Saints, and yet wrought no miracle, *St. John x. 41.* And indeed one single act of humility, or self-denial, or of the love of God, goes farther towards the making a Saint, than even the raising of the dead to life. Others again vainly imagine, that sanctity consists in having visions, revelations, and extasies; or in the gifts of prophecy, of tongues, or of an eminent knowledge of the most sublime and divine truths: because they often meet with such things as these in the lives of Saints: but none of these things made them Saints; and they have been even found in such as were no Saints: whilst on the other hand many eminent Saints have had none of them: neither ought any humble Christian to desire, or to seek for such things as these; though every Christian ought to desire, and to endeavour to be a Saint. Nor does sanctity consist in much fasting, or in wearing hair shirts, or in taking disciplines, or in giving large alms, or in reciting long prayers, or in any other extraordinary practices or observances; all which, however good in themselves, have been found in hypocrites; or in such as have been all the while slaves to pride, self-love and passion. But true sanctity consists in unfeigned charity, in both its branches; that is, both as it regards the love of God, and of our neighbours: it consists in conformity with the will of God in all things, and adhering close to him: it consists in being humble of heart, and sincerely despising ourselves: it consists in denying ourselves, and taking up our cross and following Christ. Such as do these things are Saints: where any of these is wanting, there is no sanctity.

Consider 2dly, that sanctity does not so much de-

pend upon doing *extraordinary* actions, as upon doing our *ordinary* actions *extraordinarily* well. Our life passes away in the daily *ordinary* actions, which take up our time from morning till night: such as our rising, our morning exercise, our daily labours, or the business of our calling, our regular devotions and spiritual lectures, our meals, our conversation, the employment of our thoughts, when our hands are at work, our examination of conscience at night, and our evening exercise, &c. Now if all these daily performances are done *extraordinarily* well, our whole time will be spent *extraordinary* well; and nothing more will be required to make us Saints. Neither will it cost us more to do them well than to do them ill: on the contrary, the better we perform them, and the more diligent and fervent we are in them, the more easy and delightful they will be to us; and the grace of God, and his blessing, will go along with all we do. O how inexcusable then are we, O! my soul, if we do not strive to be saints, when we may attain to this happiness, even by our daily ordinary actions, provided we perform them with due perfection!

Consider 3dly, that the perfection of our ordinary actions depends upon the purity of intention with which we perform them; on our attention to God in all that we do; and our seasoning all our labours and employments with frequent aspirations and ejaculations of divine love; and frequent oblations of ourselves, and of all that we do, to God. *By thy ordinance the day goeth on*, saith the royal Prophet, (Ps. cxviii. 91.) *for all things serve thee*. Yes, my soul, all things continually serve the Lord, but the rebel angels, and the rebellious will of man. Now this rebellious will of ours we bring to serve him by beginning the day with an oblation of our wholeselves to him; by directing all our thoughts, words, and actions, by a pure intention, to his glory; by making his holy will the rule of all we do; by beginning every work with an offering of what we are going to do, together



with an offering of our hearts to him; and by often renewing this offering in the midst of our works; by doing all our actions, as much as we can, in his presence; and by intermingling acts of divine love with all we do. Thus shall our days be *found to be full days*; thus shall they all *go on by God's ordinance*; thus shall they *all serve him*.

Conclude to take great care to give to all thy ordinary actions their due perfection, by following these rules. And as to thy daily employments, and all the business and labours of thy lawful calling; ever consider them as appointed by the holy will of God; and ever perform them in compliance with, and in obedience to his heavenly will; thus thou mayest make them all acts of virtue, and even acts of divine love. And if these thy daily employments be laborious, or otherwise mortifying or disagreeable to thy self-love, thou mayest also make them acts of penance; by accepting of them, as imposed upon thee by God, for thy sins; and offering them up to God, in union with the labours and sufferings of Jesus Christ, for thy sins.

*On the Sanctity of the Christian's Institute.*

Nov. 6. **C**ONSIDER first, that the Christian religion is in the nature of a religious order, or institute, founded by Jesus Christ our Lord, and taking its name from him. The Son of God himself came down from *heaven* to be the founder of the Christian order. Its origin is *heavenly*. Its rule is *heavenly*: being God's own word, and the gospel of his Son. Its tendency is *heavenly*: it tends to deliver us from all those evils, both with regard to time and eternity, in which we were unhappily involved by our first parents' transgression; particularly from the death of sin, and from the second death of hell; and to bring us to our sovereign good; to all perfection of sanctity here, and to our true and eternal life hereafter. The means it furnishes us with for this

end, are also *heavenly*: such as the communications of divine grace; the sacred mysteries and sacraments of divine institution; the daily conversation with God by prayer; and the *communion of the Saints*, or a happy association with all holy persons, in all holy things. The Christian makes his solemn religious profession at the foot of the altar at his baptism: there he engages himself by vows to renounce the world, the flesh, and the devil; and to lead an innocent and saintly life: there he receives for his habit the white robe, denoting cleanness of heart, and innocence; with a charge to keep it all his life time without spot or stain: there he puts on Jesus Christ, by a new birth, in order to a new and spiritual life, that may know no death. O! can any thing be more holy than the sacred institute of the Christian order; where the founder, the rule, the exercises, the vows, the habit, and the whole manner of life that it requires, are all most heavenly and divine!

Consider 2dly, the blindness and misery of the greatest part of Christians, who live in a strange insensibility of the excellence of the Christian religion, of the obligations of it, and the sanctity it requires of them, in consequence, of the alliance it gives them with the whole blessed Trinity. The dignity of a Christian is indeed very great. He has the honour to be enrolled in the service of the great King. He is made his domestick, his friend, his favourite. But this is not all: he is even adopted, through Jesus Christ, to be a child of God, and an heir of his eternal kingdom: he is ingrafted and incorporated in Christ; and made a member of that mystical body, of which the Son of God is the head: he is made partaker of his spirit; of his kingly and priestly unction; and in some measure of his divine nature. The grace of Christianity is so great, that the apostle, writing to the Ephesians, seems to want words to express it. He calls it *the unsearchable riches of Christ*, and *the mystery hidden from eternity*

in God, (Eph. iv. 8, 9) with a great deal more to the like purpose, as well with relation to the exceeding great goodness of God, manifested in his calling us, without any desert of ours, to so great a grace, as this of the Christian religion: as also with regard to the incomprehensible advantages which this grace entitles us to. But oh! may we not too justly apply to the greatest part of those who are called to all these advantages, that of the royal prophet: (*Ps. xlviii. 21.*) *Man when he was in honour did not understand; he hath been compared to senseless beasts, and made like to them.* Alas! this seems to be the case of millions of Christians.

Consider 3dly, that our eternal welfare absolutely depends upon our living up to the character of a Christian, and to the duties and obligations of the Christian religion: in particular, those we have taken upon us by our baptismal vows, and which are insisted upon as essential, by our holy rule and founder. These are all reduced into a small compass, in these words of the Psalmist: *Turn away from evil, and do good.* This is a short abstract of the whole duty of a Christian. The first part requires a settled determination of the soul never to commit a wilful sin for any consideration whatsoever; no not even if life itself were at stake. The second part requires a constant attention to do the will of God in all things, and to advance every day in the love of God. Do this, my soul, and thou shalt be a Christian indeed: persevere in this until death, and thou shalt receive the crown of eternal life.

Conclude henceforward to have always before thy eyes both the dignity and the sanctity of the character of a Christian; and to shew it forth in thy life: lest otherwise it rise in judgment against thee, and prove thy greater condemnation at that day, when thou shalt be called upon to give up an account of thy stewardship.

*On following the Light of Christ.*

Nov. 7. **C**ONSIDER first, those words of the Son of God, John viii. 12. *I am the light of the world; he that followeth me, walketh not in darkness, but shall have the light of life.* Poor man, by sin, had forfeited the *true light*; he was fallen from the *light of truth and life*, when he fell from his God: he was fallen into the darkness of ignorance, error, and vice, and was sitting in the shadow of death. God sent the *true light* from heaven, *which enlighteneth every man that cometh into this world*, when he sent his Son from heaven, *in the bowels of his mercy, as the Orient, (or day-spring) from on high, to visit us; to enlighten them that sat in darkness, and in the shadow of death, and to direct our feet in the way of peace,* Luke i. 78, 79. Jesus Christ then came from heaven to be our *light*; to enlighten our souls with the *light* of his heavenly truth: to bring us forth from the *darkness* of our errors and vices: to impart to us the *light of faith*, as a *lamp* to shine unto us, *in this dark place* of this wretched world, *till the true day dawn, and the day-star arise in our hearts,* (2 Pet. i. 19.) to give us here the *light* of his divine grace, for the time of our mortal pilgrimage; and to bring us hereafter to the *light* of glory, where *in the light of God, we shall see God the light* for all eternity. Embrace, my soul, this light; that comes down from heaven to visit thee: and see thou follow it in the whole conduct of thy life. O take care lest thou incur the *judgment* of condemnation, by *the light's coming into the world, and thy loving darkness rather than the light,* John iii. 19.

Consider 2dly, that Jesus Christ came down from heaven to enlighten the world, both with his heavenly doctrine, and with his heavenly life. He came from God to be our teacher, and to open in our favour his school of heavenly truths: truths to which the world was quite a stranger at that time, and

which the children of this world, who being blinded with their passions, *love darkness more than light*, will not understand even to this day : because they will not *come to this great light, lest their works should be reprov'd* by it : *for their works are evil*, John iii. 19, 20. This *light* of Christ reproveth our self-love, and all its unhappy offspring, with all our darling inclinations and affections : it confutes all the maxims of flesh and blood, and all the errors we are so apt to entertain with relation to worldly honour, interest, and pleasure. It discovers to us the emptiness and vanity, the mere nothing of all that passes away with time, and shews us that nothing is truly great, or deserves our esteem or affection, but what is eternal. This *light* of Christ teaches us to know both God and ourselves : it teaches us all virtues, poverty of spirit, humility, self-denial, meekness, patience, penance, conformity to the will of God, and divine charity : it shews us the way to all perfection, and to a happy eternity : it conducts us to God himself, and to *the light of life*, that is with him.

Consider 3dly, that in order to come *at the light of life*, we must *follow Christ*, not only by believing his doctrine, but by walking in his footsteps, and by an imitation of his virtues. ' We must imitate his life and manners,' says a holy man, ' if we would be truly *enlightened*, and delivered from all blindness of heart : let it then be our chiefest study to meditate on the life of Jesus Christ.' *A. Kempis*, L. i. C. i. Yes, Christians, by often meditating on the life of Christ, we shall learn how we ought to behave on all occasions ; the bright *light* of his virtues will shew us the way in which we are to walk : it will shew us what we are to avoid, and from what we are to fly ; as well as what we are to embrace, and what we are to follow, on every occasion. *He is the way, the truth, and the life*, St. John xiv. 6. The *light* of his *life* shining on us, by the means of daily meditation, will conduct us into this

*One Thing is necessary.* Luke x. 42. 281

way, will guide us to this *truth*, and will bring us safe to this *life*; even to the very fountain's head of eternal *life*.

Conclude to follow, henceforward, in the practice of thy life, the heavenly light, both of the doctrine, and of the example of Jesus Christ. Walk after him, and his light; and thou shalt neither walk in darkness here, nor go into darkness hereafter. This following the light of Christ will bring thee to the happy society of the *children of light*, in the region of *light* everlasting.

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*One Thing is necessary.* Luke x. 42.

Nov. 8. **C**ONSIDER first, O my soul, and open thy eyes to the great light of this divine sentence of thy Saviour: *One thing is necessary*. It will be of infinite service to thee, to dispel the darkness and mists that encompass thee on all sides, and to direct all thy steps to the sovereign truth, thy sovereign good. Alas! what a multiplicity of cares and concerns about empty vanities and worldly toys, is apt to take up our whole mind and heart. How busy are we, all the day long, in catching flies! What a variety of amusements distracts our thoughts! In what a dissipation do we generally live! How little is there of God in our daily conversation! How few of our words or actions are referred to him! Oh! it is too true, that we let every thing else take place of that *only business* for which we came into this world! And yet all this other variety and multiplicity, which employs all our thoughts, words, and actions, is just nothing at all to our purpose: whereas upon that *one business* our *all* depends for all eternity.

Consider 2dly, what this *one thing necessary* is, that is here recommended by our Lord? Doubtless, it is nothing else but the dedicating ourselves to the love and service of our God, in order to the securing the eternal salvation of our souls. O! *vanity of vanities*,

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and all is vanity, but the loving of God, and the serving him alone. Kempis. Yes, my soul, this is our *only business*, this is the *business*, for which alone we came into this world: nothing else deserves to be called *our business*: whatever our employment, or calling, be in this world, it must ever be subordinate to this great *business*: all our thoughts, words, and deeds, should ever tend to God, and to our eternal salvation. Whatever takes us off from attending to this great business, is hurtful, it is pernicious to us: whatever has no tendency to this *one thing necessary*, is all quite idle and vain. O *what doth it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?* Matt. xvi. 26.

Consider 3dly, those words of our Saviour, *Math. vi. 33. Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his justice, and all these things shall be added unto you.* This *kingdom of God*, which we are here commanded to seek, in the first place, is the *kingdom of grace* in our souls; it is the *kingdom of divine love*. *This kingdom of God is within us*, Luke xvii. 21. It must be established in our own interior. The *justice of God*, is that by which he makes us *just indeed*, through the merits of the blood of his Son Jesus Christ the just: it is the *charity of God*, which is *poured abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, who is given to us*, Rom. v. 5. This *kingdom of divine love*; this *justice*, and *charity of God* in our souls, we must continually aspire to: this must be the first and greatest object of our longing desires: this we must seek with all our power: for this we must always pray with all the fervour of our heart. And as to all things else, as far as they are proper and necessary for us, our heavenly Father will not fail to furnish us with them. We have his divine word engaged for it.

Conclude to follow, in the practice of thy life, these divine lessons of light and truth: by considering henceforward the love and service of thy God, and the salvation of thy soul, as thy *only business*; and all other concerns, comparatively with this, as no-

thing to thee. O take care of this *one thing necessary!* and all shall be well with thee, both for time and eternity.

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*Strive to enter by the narrow Gate.* Luke xiii. 24.

Nov. 9. **C**ONSIDER first, how the light of Christ in the gospel, represents to us the *broad road* of the world, as infinitely dangerous to our souls, and as directly leading to the *wide gate* of eternal damnation. *Enter ye in at the narrow gate,* saith he, (*Matt. vii. 13, 14.*) *for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction; and many there are who go in thereat. O how narrow is the gate, and how strait is the way, that leadeth to life; and few there are that find it!* Here we see there are two ways, in which men walk in this life; and two gates out of this life into eternity. One of these ways is *broad* and spacious, agreeable to the world and to the flesh, and crowded with great multitudes of slaves to the world and to the flesh, whom it conducts down the hill to a *wide gate*; by which they no sooner enter, but they suddenly slip down a precipice, into the bottomless pit of a miserable eternity. The other way is *strait* and *narrow*, rough and craggy, by reason of the restraint it puts upon the liberties and passions of worldlings, and its disagreeableness to the corrupt inclinations of flesh and blood; and therefore few, in comparison, care to walk in it: but these few, by the favour of heaven, walk on cheerfully towards the *gate of life*, assisted and comforted by Jesus Christ, whom they follow; and with him, and through him, are happily introduced by this *narrow gate* into the most spacious and most beautiful regions of never-ending bliss. See, my soul, which of these two ways thou art disposed to choose; and make that choice now, which thou shalt be glad to have made for all eternity.

Consider 2dly, what it is that engages such numbers of Christians to walk on, with so little concern, in the *broad road* that leads to destruction; in spite



of this solemn declaration of the gospel, and of the light of their faith. O! it is their want of thinking; it is their wilfully shutting their eyes against the light, and so running blindfold to the precipice: it is, in the language of the wise man, (*Wisd. vi. 12.*) their being quite bewitched with worldly toys and cheating vanities: it is a downright folly and madness, which they shall loudly condemn in hell for all eternity. Alas! how unhappy are they, how wretchedly blind indeed, to profess themselves Christians; that is, followers of Christ, and yet to believe and follow the maxims of the world, rather than the maxims of the gospel of Jesus Christ; to obey the laws of the world, of the flesh, and of the devil, their mortal enemies, rather than the ordinances of their Saviour: to prefer lies, deceit, and empty vanity, before truth; darkness before light; slavery before liberty; misery before happiness; hell before heaven; and Satan before God! My soul, see thou never make so wretched a choice. Let not the world, the flesh, and the devil, drag thee along with them in the broad road of perdition: it would be a sad thing to go to hell for company sake. O choose the narrow way of self-denial, and true devotion, in the company of Christ and his saints, and thou shalt live with them for ever.

Consider 3dly, that frightful sentence, repeated more than once by our Lord in the gospel; *many are called, but few are chosen*: for it has a very close connection with what he has said above, of the *broad road* that leads to eternal wo, and the *narrow way*, that leads to everlasting life. Yes, Christians, *many are called, but few are chosen*; because the far greater part of mortals are fond of the broad road, which gratifies their passions and corrupt inclinations, and prefer the *highway* of the world, the way of self-love, the way of *the lust of the flesh, of the lust of the eyes*, and of *the pride of life*, before the *narrow way* of self-denial and of the love of God, which is less agreeable to flesh and blood. God, on his

part, is infinitely good and merciful: he desires that *all should be saved* and *should come to the knowledge of the truth*: and his Son *Christ Jesus gave himself a redemption for all*, 1 Tim. ii. 4. 6. If, then, but few are chosen, it cannot be for want of good will in God, but for want of a correspondence on the part of man. It is for want of a compliance with the necessary conditions of salvation; the chiefest of which is, the keeping of the divine commandments. In a word, it is because men choose rather to walk in the *broad* road, than in the *narrow*: which in fact is choosing hell before heaven. So that the reason why they are not *chosen*, is because they have no real mind to be *chosen*.

Conclude to keep off, in the practice of thy life, from the broad road of the children of this world, and to walk in the narrow way of the children of light, by living always in the fear of God, and keeping his commandments; and thou shalt not fail of being of the number of *the chosen*.

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*No Man can serve two Masters.* Matt. vi. 24.

Nov. 10. **C**ONSIDER first, this great principle of Christian morality, laid down by our Lord in the Gospel, *no man can serve two masters*: by which he gives us to understand, that there is no such thing as serving him, and saving our souls, and at the same time serving the world, the flesh, or the devil. For these are enemies to God, and claim a service of us, which our great Master absolutely disallows: so that we cannot please them, without displeasing him; nor be friends to them, without being enemies to him. Christians we have all manner of obligations to serve our God; he is our only true *master*: he is our first beginning, and our last end: he is our Creator, and our Redeemer; infinitely good in himself, and infinitely good to us: he is the source of our very being, and of all our good: we came into the world for nothing else but to serve him: to his service we were solemnly dedicated, when we were first

made Christians : the serving him is to make us happy, both in time and eternity. But what pretensions can the world, the flesh, or the devil, have to our service? Or what obligations have we to them? They are all of them mortal enemies to our true welfare, and to the eternal salvation of our souls : if we serve them, they will make us miserable for ever. O let us then never be so wretched, so mad, so wicked, as to put them in competition with God, or to withdraw any part of our service from our God, (to whom all is due) to bestow it upon these traitors and rebels, who are enemies to all that is good.

Consider 2dly, the particular application which our Lord makes of this principle, to warn us against the love and service of mammon, that is, of worldly riches, of filthy lucre, of money, and of all the other perishable goods, as we call them, of this deluded and deluding world : *you cannot serve, saith he, both God and mammon.* No man has any inclination to serve the devil for his own sake, or out of any love that he can have for this filthy monster : but this wicked enemy makes use of the mammon of the world, and of the allurements of the flesh, as baits, to draw poor-unthinking souls to him ; and to engage them in his slavery, for the sake of those perishable toys, which he paints out to them as if they were solid goods ; so as to fix their affections upon them, to the prejudice of the love and service of their Maker. Therefore both here, and in many other places of holy writ we are warned against these baits of Satan, and especially against the love and service of this *manimon of iniquity*, as inconsistent with the love and service of God, and destructive of the salvation of our souls : because it is setting up an idol, in opposition to the living God ; and loving and serving the creature, instead of the Creator, who is blessed for evermore. Dear Lord, preserve us from being ever guilty of any such treason !

Consider, 3dly, that as we cannot serve both God

and mammon, so we cannot serve both God and pleasure; we cannot serve both God and pride; we cannot serve both God and our impure affections; or our unhappy self-love, which is the source of all our evils. And so in general, with regard to every thing else, the love of which takes us off from the love and service of the living God, it always holds good, that we cannot serve both the Creator and the creature. Our God is a *jealous* lover: he will allow of no love, but what is quite regular and orderly, and kept in subjection to the love of him. He declares against a *divided heart*, Osea x. 2. *Their heart is divided*, saith he, *now they shall perish*. He claims the whole heart as his own due. He will allow of no rival there. He expects to reign there without a partner. See, my soul, upon what conditions God will accept of thee. Thou must be wholly his, without reserve, or he will not receive thee. In the offering thou makest of thyself to his divine service, thou must take care not to keep back, by fraud, any part, like Ananias and Saphira, (*Acts v.*) lest thou fall under the like judgment as they did!

Conclude to admit of no other master of thy heart and affection, but the God that made thy heart for himself, and all things else for thee. None but he can fill thy heart: all other things are just nothing at all, when compared with him. Fear him alone: love him alone: give thy whole self to him alone: thus shalt thou be wholly his, and he wholly thine, for all eternity.

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*He that doth not renounce all that he possesseth, cannot be my Disciple.* Luke xiv. 33.

Nov. 11. **C**ONSIDER first, that every Christian, as such, ought to be a *disciple* of Jesus Christ: the very name of *Christian* implies as much; and the first Christians were originally known and distinguished by no other name, than that of *disciples*, that is of scholars, and followers of this heavenly Master. See then, my soul, what the

character of a *Christian* obliges thee to, by the declaration of the Son of God himself. If thou wilt be a *disciple* of Christ, if thou wilt be a *Christian* indeed, and to the purpose, of securing to thyself that happy eternity, with the living God, that is prepared for Christ's *true disciples*, thou must renounce all things else, how near or dear soever they may be to thee, to follow him. Thou must renounce them, if not in effect, at least in affection; by taking off thy heart from them, and transferring it to thy only sovereign good: and thou must renounce them in effect too, as often and as far as they stand in thy way, so as to hinder thee from following Christ. This is the great and fundamental lesson of practical Christianity; this is the abridgement of the gospel: to give up all, that thou mayest find all; to be disengaged from the creature, that thou mayest be united to the Creator.

Consider 2dly, that our Lord explains this obligation of our renouncing all things else, in order to be his disciples, by two comparisons: the one of a man, who purposes to build a tower, but first sits down to reckon up the charges, to see if he has wherewithal to finish the work: the other of a king, who is going to wage war against another king, but first considers whether he has sufficient forces to encounter his adversary. Every Christian is highly concerned in these two comparisons; inasmuch as every Christian, if he desires to be happy for ever, must raise a spiritual building here upon the foundation, which is Christ; a building that may be proof against all storms and inundations; a *tower* that may stand for ever: and every Christian is engaged in a warfare against the prince of darkness, and all his allies; wherein, if he does not come off with victory, he must be miserable for all eternity. Therefore the Christian must sit down, and must reckon up the necessary charges of this building; to see that he may be able to finish it: and he must take care to secure to himself sufficient forces, to enable him

to carry on this war, and to subdue the enemy. Now it is by renouncing all things else to follow Christ, that we are associated to him, and made partakers of all his treasures; and we exchange our weakness for his strength: and thus we are enabled both to elevate our building even to heaven, and to overthrow all the powers of hell.

Consider 3dly, how true it is, that our affections to the things of this world, are indeed the chiefest hindrance to us; as well in carrying on our spiritual building, as in our conflicts with our spiritual enemies. The builder will make no progress in his building, if instead of applying himself seriously to the work he has undertaken, he loses his time in amusing himself about other things, nothing to his purpose; or if he takes little or no care to procure the necessary materials; or even suffers his hands and feet to be shackled, when he should be at work. It is the case of all such Christians, as have not yet mortified their affections to the things of the world. These, alas! take up their thoughts; these employ their time: what should be expended in carrying on the great building, is all wasted upon these; and the builder lies grovelling upon the earth, tied down with the chains of his misplaced affections. And as for the wrestling, in which we are engaged with the spirits of wickedness, it is no less certain, that nothing gives them a greater hold on us, than our unmortified affections to these worldly toys. It is like carrying a load of cloaths about us, when we are to wrestle with one that is stript, who will be sure, by that occasion, to have the advantage of us. Therefore we who are to wrestle with the devil, who is naked, must fling off our garments, saith St. Gregory, (*Homil. 32.*) by renouncing our worldly affections, or we shall be sure to be brought down by him.

Conclude to make it thy perpetual study, to take off thy affections from all things of the earth, and to disregard the creature, that thou mayest find the

Creator. And seeing that a great grace is required to this, which may untie the soul from all that is not God, and carry her up, upon the wings of the dove, to rest eternally in him : continually to pray for this grace.

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*If any Man will come after me, let him deny himself.*  
Matt. xvi. 24.

Nov. 12. **C**ONSIDER first, that the disciple of Jesus Christ, by the rule of the gospel, is not only obliged to renounce (at least in affection) all things else for the sake of his Master : but what is the hardest of all, he must also *renounce and deny himself*. And this his renouncing of himself, is absolutely insisted upon by our Lord, as the first, the most essential, and the most indispensable condition, for every one that would *come after him*, and belong to him. Yes, Christians, there is that irreconcilable opposition between this *self*, strangely corrupted by sin, surrounded with darkness, and bent upon evil, and the purity and sanctity of Jesus Christ, and the bright light of his truth ; that there is no coming, in a proper manner, at the one, without renouncing the other : there is no coming at divine charity, which teaches us to love our God with our whole heart, (the principal of all Christian duties) without declaring an eternal war with *self-love*, the capital enemy to the love of God, and the parent of all vices. And therefore we are not only commanded, in the gospel, to *renounce*, and to *deny* ourselves, in order to follow Christ, but also to *hate* ourselves, or, as it is expressed in the original, (*Luke xiv. 26.* and *John xii. 25.*) *to hate our souls* in this world, in order to save them in the next. See, my soul, upon what conditions thou art to be a disciple of the Son of God ; thou must not only renounce all things else ; thou must also renounce and hate thyself too.

Consider 2dly, the grounds upon which is founded this strict obligation of *denying*, and of renounc-

ing ourselves in this world : namely, that we may be in a proper condition to give ourselves up entirely to God ; and thus leaving ourselves, may find him, and be eternally his. So that, in effect, this denying and renouncing ourselves, is the best way we can have of *loving* ourselves ; because it procures us the greatest goods, and brings us to our sovereign good. As on the other hand, that unhappy self-seeking, and loving to gratify ourselves in this world, is indeed *hating* ourselves ; because of the mischiefs it brings upon us, both for time and eternity. If, then, we are to renounce the affections to all things else, in order to follow Christ ; lest the love of them should divide our heart, and take it off from him ; how much more are we to renounce *self love*, for the love of him ; as being much stronger than all our other affections, and far more apt to captivate our heart, and to shut out the love of God. Yes, my soul, thy self-love is indeed the greatest enemy both of thy God, and of thy own true and everlasting welfare ; and therefore thou must not only renounce it, but abhor it too, with a most perfect hatred, and turn all thy forces against it, in order to abolish it and destroy it.

Consider 3dly, and attend to the sentiments of a great servant of God upon this subject. ‘ My son, thou must give all for all, and be nothing of thy own. Know that the love of thyself is more hurtful to thee than any thing in the world.—Thou canst not possess perfect liberty, unless thou wholly deny thyself. All self-seekers and self lovers are bound in fetters, full of desires, full of cares, unsettled, and seeking always their own ease, and not the things of Jesus Christ, but oftentimes devising and framing that which shall not stand : for all shall come to nothing that proceeds not from God. Take this short and perfect word : *Forsake all, and thou shalt find all : leave thy desires, and thou shalt find rest.* Consider this well, and when thou shalt have put it in practice, thou shalt understand ad



' things.' *Following of Christ*, L. iii. C. 27 and 32. And again, ' Son, as much as thou canst go out of thyself, so much shalt thou be able to enter into me. As the desire of nothing abroad, brings peace at home, so the relinquishing thyself interiorly, joins thee to God. I will have thee to learn the perfect renouncing of thyself, in my will, without contradiction or complaint. Follow me, *I am the way, the truth, and the life.*—If thou wilt be my disciple, deny thyself.' C. 56. My soul, let these be thy sentiments also, and strive to conform thy practice to them.

Conclude to give up both thyself, and all things else, to follow Christ; and by following him, to come at thy sovereign good; and to enjoy him for all eternity. If thou wert to give ten thousand worlds, to purchase such a treasure, all that thou shouldst give, would fall infinitely short of the value of it.

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*Except your justice exceed that of the Scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter into the kingdom of Heaven.* Matt. v. 20.

Nov. 13. **C**ONSIDER first, how much it concerns us all, to know what we must do to save our souls; and what kind of justice, that is, what degree of virtue, is necessary to bring us to heaven: lest we deceive ourselves, or let ourselves be imposed upon by the enemy with false appearances and outward shew, and catching at the shadow of virtue, lose the substance of it, and our souls into the bargain. The Scribes and Pharisees were the most precise amongst the Jews, and professed the greatest zeal for the law of God, and the true religion: they prayed much, they gave large alms, and they fasted frequently; so that they passed for saints amongst the people: and yet we are here assured, by the mouth of Truth itself, that except our virtue exceed theirs, we shall have no share in his heavenly kingdom. See, then, my soul, and examine well in

what their justice was defective ; that so thou mayest avoid their defects, lest thou perish with them : for why shouldst thou suffer thyself to be deluded, to the loss both of thy God, and of thyself, for all eternity ?

Consider 2dly, that the *justice* of the Scribes, and of the Pharisees, was many ways deficient ; but more especially in this, that it contented itself with reforming and regulating the outside, whilst it neglected the interior, which is the true seat of Christian justice. They *made clean the outside of the cup, and of the platter, whilst their inside was full of iniquity*, Luke xi. 39. Their good works were not done with a pure intention ; they sought not God, but themselves, in all they did : their prayers, their alms, their fastings, were directed to the gaining of the applause of the world ; to the end they might *be honoured* and esteemed by *men*. And whilst they avoided the more scandalous excesses of the grosser carnal sins of drunkenness and impurity, which might have rendered them infamous in the eyes of the world, they made no scruple of the spiritual sins (much more odious to God) of envy, hatred, detraction, covetousness, and an extravagant pride and conceit of themselves, joined with a contempt of all others. Thus all the good they seemed to do was quite vitiated and corrupted : all their virtues were but in appearance, and before the eyes of men ; but their vices were real, and abominable in the sight of God. Christians, *take heed of this leaven of the Pharisees*, as your Lord admonishes you : take heed of *hypocrisy*, ostentation, and an outward shew of devotion, destitute of the real substance of it. *All the glory of the true spouse, the daughter of the king, is within* : it lies hidden in the interior of the soul. Take heed lest pride or vain glory vitiate your good actions, by vitiating your intention. Keep yourselves *clean*, not only from *all the defilements of the flesh*, but of the *spirit* also ; for these are the more heinous sins of the

two. O see that nothing of the Pharisee corrupt the Christian in you.

Consider 3dly, what that *justice* is, which Jesus Christ insists upon, as necessary to the eternal salvation of our souls. It consists not in mere outward professions: for *not every one that saith to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doth the will of my Father, who is in heaven,* (Matt. vii. 12.); nor will *faith alone* suffice to Christian *justice*, James ii. 17, 24. Nor will alms, prayers, or fastings alone, make any one *just*, (as we see in the very case of the Pharisees) nor any outward form of worship, without the inward spirit; nor any thing else, that can be separated from obedience to the commandments, from true Christian humility, and divine charity. No, my soul, the justice that is to bring thee to heaven, is to *keep the commandments*, Matt. xix. 17. It is to *do the will of thy Father, who is in heaven*, Matt. vii. 21. It is to be *poor in spirit*, Matt. v. 3. It is to be *humble, like a little child*, Matt. xviii. 3, 4. It is to *love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind, and with thy whole strength, and to love thy neighbour as thy self*. This is Christian justice indeed. *Do this and thou shalt live*. But where any part of this is wanting, nothing else can make any man *just*.

Conclude to be quite in earnest in seeking and following after this Christian *justice* in all its branches; by purity of intention in all thy works; by sincerity and simplicity, or uprightness of soul; by attending to thy interior, to keep that regular and orderly; by true humility of heart; and above all things, by flying sin, and loving God: and thou shalt be just indeed before the Lord, and entitled to his heavenly kingdom.

*The Kingdom of Heaven is like unto a Treasure, &c.*  
Matt. xiii. 44.

Nov. 14. **C**ONSIDER first, that by *the kingdom of heaven*, in this, and many other places of the gospel, we are to understand that *heavenly kingdom*, by which God reigns, by his grace, in our souls. *A heavenly kingdom* indeed, which we are commanded to *seek in the first place*, (Matt. vi. 33.) and which we are taught daily to pray for, in the second Petition of the Lord's Prayer. Now this *kingdom of grace* in our souls is here likened to *a treasure*; because of its inestimable value: it is worth more than all the kingdoms of the earth: it brings God himself into our souls, to live and reign for ever there. But then it is a *hidden treasure*, because the children of this world are strangers to the true value of it: and though they have heard of the field (of virtue and devotion) where it is to be found by seeking, and by digging for it; they are far more fond of the childish toys, which amuse them at present, than of a treasure unseen; and therefore they are unwilling to be either at the charges of purchasing this field, or at the pains of digging for this treasure. Not so the man of the gospel, who having discovered this treasure, sets his whole heart upon it, *hides it diligently*, and *for the joy thereof, goes and sells all he has, and buys that field*. See, my soul, if this be thy disposition? Dost thou consider this kingdom of divine grace as a *treasure* indeed, and the richest of all treasures? Is thy heart set upon it? For *where thy treasure is, there thy heart will be*. Art thou willing to purchase, at any rate, that blessed field where this treasure lies?

Consider 2dly, the lessons we are taught by our Lord in this parable: particularly with regard to the value we ought to set upon divine grace, and the great esteem and affection we ought to have for our spiritual advancement, and for all such things as may help our souls forward, and bring them nearer

to our God. We are here also taught, that the Christian who desires to secure to himself this heavenly *treasure*, which he has begun to discover, must not make a shew of it, by ostentation or vain glory, which would be the direct way to lose it; but must *hide* it, by humility; like a traveller, who carrying a treasure about him, endeavours to conceal it, for fear of robbers. Moreover, we are taught, that to make this *treasure* our own, we must purchase *the field* where it lies, and that this purchase will stand us in all we are worth. This *field*, in which this spiritual treasure is concealed, is true wisdom: it is a devout and virtuous life; it is the following of Christ in good earnest, and being his *true disciples*. Now to purchase a field, of so great a value as this is, we must part with all things else; that is, we must give up all other affections to embrace and follow Christ: but then in exchange he, on his part, will make over to us all his treasures, and himself into the bargain.

Consider 3dly, Christian souls, if you desire to have a share in so great a happiness, by what steps you are to advance towards it, and to come to the possession of it. And first you must be convinced, by the word of God, and by the light of faith, that there is a treasure of inestimable value, designed by your heavenly Father for you, to enrich you, both for time and eternity; if you will but make use of the proper means to find it out, and to make it your own. The next step must be, to conceive a great esteem for this heavenly treasure; an ardent desire to acquire it, and a strong resolution to spare neither pains nor costs in the acquisition of it. This desire and resolution must be followed by a diligent enquiry, after the field of wisdom and virtue, where this treasure is hidden; and then digging there, till it is found. Now all this is to be effected by the exercise of consideration, and mental prayer. Yes, my soul, it is by daily opening thy eyes to the light of God, and to his divine truths, in meditation, that

thou shalt both learn what a treasure there is in virtue; and how thou art to be put in possession of it. Here thou shalt discover the beauty of holiness; how sweet it is to love God; and how happy to serve him in good earnest: here thou shalt be inflamed with a fervent desire of procuring for thyself so great a happiness; and with a holy *hunger and thirst* after it. The pondering well, by deep consideration, eternal truths, is like digging for the treasure of the kingdom of heaven; and the affections and resolutions of the soul, by which she is determined at all events to consecrate the remainder of her life to divine love, is like selling all to purchase the field where this treasure is deposited.

Conclude to use thy best endeavours to seek without ceasing for this treasure of the kingdom of heaven, in the field of virtue and devotion; and to dig daily for it, by the daily exercise of meditation and mental prayer, and thou shalt not fail to find it.

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*On the Parable of the Marriage-Feast.*

Matt. xxii.

Nov. 15. **C**ONSIDER first, how our Lord here likens *the kingdom of heaven*, (that is his spiritual kingdom, which he came from *heaven* to establish, and which is to bring our souls to *heaven*) to a marriage-feast, which a great king makes for the wedding of his son. To this feast many are invited who refuse to come: many take no notice of the invitation, but go their ways, one to his farm, another to his traffick: many afflict, and persecute even to death, the messengers that are sent to call them to the wedding. All these then are rejected and condemned: and in their place, the poor, the blind and the lame, are gathered together, from the highways and from the hedges, and are brought in to be guests at this royal feast. But the man that presumed to come in without having on a wedding garment, is ordered to be bound hand and foot, and to be cast out into the exterior darkness, where there shall be

weeping and gnashing of teeth. So far the parable : now let us see how it is to be applied ; and what sacred truths we are to learn from it ? The Son of God came down from heaven to wed to himself our human nature, by the mystery of his incarnation ; and every one of our souls in particular, by a happy union of grace and love. This is that wedding which the great King of heaven and earth makes for his only Son. The marriage feast, with which this wedding is celebrated, is begun here upon earth by grace, in the souls of as many as sincerely come to Christ with faith and love ; and shall be perpetual hereafter, by the eternal enjoyment of him in his heavenly paradise. To this marriage feast both Jews and Gentiles were long ago invited by the Apostles, and other messengers of God : and all nations are still invited to the same, as well by apostolic preachers sent amongst them for their conversion, as by many other ways by which God daily calls souls to his love and service, in order to their salvation. Happy they that duly correspond with these heavenly calls ; and readily come to this feast, to which they are so lovingly invited by so great a King ! But then they must take care to come with the proper dispositions, signified by the wedding garment : without which they must not expect any part with the bridegroom in his everlasting banquet.

Consider 2dly, the infinite goodness of God manifested to us in this parable, by his inviting us all to this heavenly feast : considering what this feast is, what kind of entertainment he has here prepared for us ; and how very wretched, and undeserving we are of any such favour. But O the strange stupidity of so many poor thoughtless mortals, who daily slight and neglect this divine invitation ! O how blind, how miserable, how wicked are they to prefer these worldly toys, this furm, this traffick, these empty airy bubbles, before this divine banquet ; where God desires to feast their souls with himself ; by the sweet blessings and communications of his graces here,

and by *inebriating* them hereafter, for all eternity, *with the plenty of his house, and making them drink of the torrent of his pleasure, at the very head of the fountain of life.*

Consider 3dly, the dreadful consequences of neglecting, or rejecting these heavenly invitations, by which we are called to the *marriage feast of the Lamb*. Alas! our all is here at stake: our whole happiness, for time and eternity, absolutely depends upon our coming to this feast. We shall be perpetually miserable if we are excluded from it. And shall we be so wretched as wilfully to exclude ourselves by refusing to come, when we are so pressingly invited by the King of heaven? Will he not highly resent this contemptuous treatment; this slighting of his gracious calls; this preferring the vanities and lying fooleries of the world before him and his banquet? O there is nothing moves him more to indignation! It is this crying sin is the principal cause of the reprobation of all that are lost. And therefore our Lord concludes this parable with that terrible sentence, that *many are called but few are chosen*; to excite us to a diligence and fervour in corresponding with grace; and to convince us, that if we are not of the number of the elect, the fault is entirely ours, in not answering the calls of heaven; but preferring mere baubles, even the idols of our passions, before that marriage feast, to which he so graciously invites us.

Conclude, O my soul, to secure at least thy own eternal welfare, by a ready compliance with all the gracious calls of heaven; and by being quite serious and in earnest in hastening to this feast of grace, to which thou art invited. But remember to take along with thee the *wedding garment* of divine love, with a happy and holy resolution and determination of dedicating and consecrating what remains of thy life to thy God; of flying all known and wilful sin, more than any other evil whatsoever; of being faithful until death; and of labouring to advance every day more than other in the way of God and of true life.



With this wedding garment thou shalt be both a welcome and an eternal guest: without it thou shalt be sentenced to be cast out into the exterior darkness.

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*On the Parable of the barren Fig-Tree.*

Luke xiii.

Nov. 16. **C**ONSIDER first, that all Christians are like trees, planted in the vineyard of Christ: and that he expects of them all that they should bring forth fruit, each one in his kind. He will not be content with their making a fair shew with beautiful leaves: nor yet with their bringing forth a meaner sort of fruit, unworthy of his vineyard: but he requires that they should bring forth *good fruit*, and declares (*Matt. vii. 19.*) *that every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit, shall be cut down, and shall be cast into the fire.* This sentence then stands against all such trees as are barren in our Lord's vineyard: yes the axe is already laid at the root of them all. *Matt. iii. 10.* However, as we see, in the parable of the fig-tree, God in his great patience and mercy bears with them for a while, and suspends the execution of the sentence, in hopes of their coming in time to bring forth good fruit: till after repeated disappointments, he lets the sentence take place; and suddenly cuts them down, to be the fuel of a fire that shall never be extinguished. See here, my soul, and dread the sad consequences of continuing to be a barren tree, in the vineyard of our Lord; and of *despising the riches of his goodness, and his patience, and long suffering,* with which he waits so long, in hopes of *good fruit.*

Consider 2dly, as to thy own particular, how much thou owest to God, for having planted thee in his vineyard; and for all that he has done for thee, that thou mightest be fruitful. O how often has he visited thee, during all these past years, with the dew of heaven, and with the wholesome showers of his divine graces! What dressing and manuring has he

not daily bestowed upon thee! How early a knowledge has he given thee of himself; how often hast thou been favoured with his heavenly word, by which his divine will has been notified to thee? How often hast thou been admitted to his sacraments, the fountains of grace and life? These are great advantages indeed: these have made many trees very fruitful: these have made many great Saints. But what fruits have they produced in thee? How hast thou corresponded with all these visits and favours of heaven? Hast thou hitherto brought forth *good fruit*, or *bad fruit*? Hast thou not at the best, contented thyself with the leaves of some outward performances, like those of the Scribes and Pharisees, that might please the eyes of the world; without bearing any real fruits of solid Christian virtue? If so, remember what a sentence stands at present against thee; and prevent the execution of it, by a speedy and hearty repentance, and conversion to God; and by beginning at least to bring forth the good fruit of a new life, before the time of thy reprieve expire, the term of which is unknown to thee, and may be very near at hand.

Consider 3dly, that the fruit which God expects from thee, is not merely that thou shouldst refrain from scandalous excesses; or that thou shouldst lead a moral honest life, as many pagans have done; or that thou shouldst frequent the public worship of the church; or any other external duties; which may be liable to be ill performed, for want of a pure intention; or corrupted with pride and self-love: but the fruits which God calls for, and insists upon, are such as are solid and sound at heart; such as are never to be found in hypocrites, or impostors, or any others but truly good Christians. Such are an unfeigned humility, and contempt of ourselves; the mortification of our own will, of our passions, and corrupt inclinations; by the virtues of obedience and self-denial: a conformity in all things with the holy will of God; sincere piety and devotion; and above

all things, true and perfect charity; by loving God with our whole hearts; and every neighbour, whether friend or enemy, in him, and for him. These are *good fruits* indeed: and the trees that bring forth such fruits as these, are *good trees*. But where these fruits are wanting, and either pride, or passion, or self-love still prevails, neither alms, nor fastings, nor long prayers, nor daily frequenting the sacraments, nor speaking with the tongues of men and angels, nor prophesying, nor working of miracles, nor even raising the dead to life, will secure any tree from the dreadful judgment of being cut down and cast into the fire.

Conclude to look well to thyself, and examine what kind of fruits thine are: whether good and sound, and fit to be presented to the Lord of the vineyard; or at the best but wild and sour, or rotten at heart, by the corruption of thy pride and self-conceit: and take care to purge away, whilst thou hast time, whatever either hinders the fruit from ripening, or rots and corrupts it. Thy eternal welfare absolutely depends upon thy bringing forth a store of *good fruit*; upon which thou mayest live for ever.

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*On the Parable of the prodigal Son.* Luke xv.

Nov. 17. **C**ONSIDER first, in the *prodigal son*, a lively image of the misery of every poor sinner, who, by wilful sin, goes away from his Father's house into a *far country*, even the region of death; and there wastes all his substance, by living riotously; that is, loses and squanders away all the graces he had received from God; and abuses all his gifts and talents, by making them all subservient to his criminal passions and lusts. Alas! how soon does he experience the *famine* that reigns in that country? A *mighty famine* indeed! A dismal want of the bread of life, and of all true nourishment: a perpetual emptiness of the soul: a hunger and thirst that is never to be satisfied. For all that is brought

to market there, though sold at a very dear rate, is but mere wind, froth, and bubbles, that can never fill the belly. In vain does the poor wretch, under this famine, sell himself for a slave to one of the citizens of that region, even to Satan, the ruler of that land of darkness, who sets him to feed his swine, viz. his own brutish passions and carnal inclinations: for he finds himself still perishing for hunger and want: he is not allowed to fill himself, even with the husks which the swine eat: they leave him still empty. Ah! sinners, see the dismal state you reduce yourselves to, when you turn your backs upon your father, and choose rather to be slaves of the devil than children of God. O never expect any solid satisfaction, or so much as one happy hour, till you return home again to your father's house.

Consider 2dly, the steps by which the *prodigal child* was reclaimed, and brought home to his father; and thou shalt find that the beginning of his conversion was his *returning to himself*, and being made sensible of his great misery. Alas! the poor deluded soul, at the same time that she leaves her father's house, by leaving her God, leaves also, and forgets herself; and is so strangely blinded and bewitched by the world, the flesh, and the devil, as to imagine herself free under the worst of slaveries; rich under the extremity of want; and honourable and happy in the very midst of disgrace, confusion, and perpetual un-easiness. But when she begins to open her inward eyes to the light of God, by serious consideration; and to *return into herself*; she is greatly alarmed at the sight of her present wretched condition, and the dreadful dangers that surround her on all sides; and threaten her continually with nothing less than a miserably eternity. Now, it is a ready correspondence with this heavenly light and grace, by a desire to return to the best of fathers, is the first step to the prodigal's conversion. But then see, my soul, how he rises up immediately, without the least delay, to follow this call. See with what dispositions of a most

profound humility, with what a sense of his own unworthiness, with what a deep sorrow, and contrition for his sins, he makes the best of his way home. O give ear to his sentiments on this occasion. *I will arise, saith he, and I will go to my father, and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee: I am not now worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants.* O that all sinners, who have imitated the prodigal in his extravagances, would imitate him also by *returning to themselves*, as he did, and by *rising without delay*, to go, and to seek the true father of their souls, with the like dispositions of a *contrite and humbled heart!*

Consider 3dly, the infinite goodness and mercy of God, expressed to us in the manner in which this heavenly father received the prodigal child returning to him. He did not stay till he came to his house: but *when he was yet a great way off, he saw him, and was moved with compassion; and running to him, he fell upon his neck, and kissed him:* he scarce gave him time to confess his guilt, before he ordered *his servants to bring forth quickly the first robe, and to put it on him, and to put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet, and to bring the fatted calf, and kill it: and let us eat, said he, and make merry: because this my son was dead, and is come to life, he was lost, and is found.* O blessed be this infinite goodness and mercy for ever, which daily exerts itself in this manner; and works the like wonders in favour of penitent sinners! He first excites them to desire to come home to him: he has pity on them, when as yet they are *a great way off*: he runs out to meet them; he lovingly receives them into his embraces; he clothes them again with the sacred robe of his divine grace; he restores them to the honour and dignity of his children; and to all the ornaments of virtue and grace, which they had forfeited by sin; he admits them to the divine banquet of the body and blood of his only Son; and causes all his heavenly court to celebrate a feast of joy upon their conversion. And

shall not all this loving kindness, this tender mercy, these extraordinary favours shewed to penitent sinners, encourage thee, my soul, and effectually determine thee to quit for good and all the husks of swine, and to run to the embraces of this Father of mercies?

Conclude, if thy case be like that of the prodigal, in being in a far country, away from thy father's house; that is, at a great distance from thy God, by mortal sin, perishing for hunger and want among the husks of swine; to determine to imitate the prodigal, in his ready correspondence with grace; in the resolution with which, he presently rises, and returns to his father; and in the disposition of humility, and contrition, with which he returns: and this great Father will undoubtedly receive thee, as he did him; and all his heavenly family shall feast and rejoice at thy conversion.

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*On the Parable of the unjust Steward.*

Luke xvi.

Nov. 18. **C**ONSIDER first, that this steward, being accused to his Lord of having wasted his substance, was called upon by him *to give up an account of his stewardship, for that he could now be steward no longer*: and therefore he sought to provide for himself, by making friends amongst his master's debtors, by discounting a considerable part of what they stood charged in their bills to his master, that so they might be willing to receive him into their houses, and to entertain him. In which, though he acted iniquitously with regard to his master, he did wisely, according to what the world calls wisdom, with regard to the providing for himself against the evil day: *for the children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light. And I say to you, saith our Lord, make to yourselves friends of the mammon of iniquity, that when you shall fail, they may receive you into everlasting dwellings.* See here, Christians, the great lessons designed for you in

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this parable. Your having so often wasted the goods of your great master, ought to give you a just apprehension of your being quickly called by him to an account, and deprived of your stewardship. What then must you do, in order to your future support and everlasting livelihood? O you must make yourselves friends, by the good use of the mammon of this world; that is, by liberal alms to God's poor servants: you must diligently exercise charity in all its branches: you must use your best endeavours to reclaim sinners from the error of their way; and by that means procure for them a discharge from their debts: and your Lord will commend you for having *done wisely* for yourselves: and these friends you have thus made for yourselves, will, through his mercy, be qualified to receive you hereafter into his eternal mansions.

Consider 2dly, in how many respects we are all stewards of this great Lord. All that we have is his: our very being is his: our whole soul and body: all our powers, faculties, and senses: all our gifts and talents: all that we possess corporally or spiritually: our whole time, and all our worldly substance. In regard to all these things we are stewards of God; and accountable to him. All these are goods that belong to this great master, which he has entrusted us with: we are unjust stewards if we waste any part of these goods; and the employing of any of them otherwise than according to his holy will and his divine ordinances, will be accounted wasting of them, in the eyes of him before whom we shall one day most certainly appear, to give an account of our whole stewardship, and of all the years we have had his goods in our hands. O who shall be able to stand this examination of accounts; upon the issue of which an eternity depends! O who shall be able to answer for one article in a thousand!

Consider 3dly, O my soul, those words in the parable, as addressed to thee this day: *Give an account of thy stewardship*: and see what thou couldst say

for thyself if this day were to be thy last, and thy accounts were to be immediately inspected. Thou knowest not the day, nor the hour: see then, what account thou couldst give if this should be the day. For why shouldst thou expose thyself any longer to the dreadful danger of being called upon when unprepared, to thy eternal condemnation. Alas! has there been hitherto any part of thy life in which thou hast acted the part of an honest and faithful steward, with relation to the goods of thy master? How little share has he had in thy thoughts, words, and actions? How little of thy time has been employed in his service? How often have all thy powers and faculties, and all thy senses, both exterior and interior, been alienated from him, and made instruments of offence? How often have his choicest gifts and talents been abused and perverted? What is become of all the graces, purchased for thee by the blood of Christ? Where are all the inspirations, calls, and reproaches of conscience with which he has visited thee? Where the sacraments thou hast received? The word of God, and so many other spiritual advantages, or temporal blessings, thou hast been favoured with? How few are there of all these goods of thy master which thou hast not wasted or perverted? He has even made over in a manner to thee the passion and death of his only Son; and deposited all his merits with thee, in the sacred mysteries; and what little use, or advantage, hast thou hitherto made of them? Ah! my poor soul, in how wretched a state indeed are all our accounts? And what have we not to apprehend from the justice of our Lord, for having been such wicked stewards all our life time?

Conclude now at least to set thy accounts in order, to rectify all that has hitherto been amiss, and henceforward to begin upon a new bottom; by dedicating thy whole self, and all thou hast, to the love and service of him, to whom all belongs upon all manner



of titles. It is a most crying injustice to waste his goods : how much more to employ them against himself, by wilful sin ?

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*On the rich Man and the poor. Beggar.*

Luke xvi.

Nov. 19. **C**ONSIDER first, the words of our Lord in the gospel : ‘ There was a certain ‘ rich man,’ saith he, ‘ who was clothed in purple ‘ and fine linen; and feasted sumptuously every day. ‘ And there was a certain beggar, named Lazarus, ‘ who lay at his gate, full of sores, desiring to be filled ‘ with the crumbs that fell from the rich man’s table ; ‘ and no one did give him : moreover the dogs came, ‘ and licked his sores. And it came to pass that the ‘ beggar died, and was carried by the Angels into ‘ Abraham’s bosom. And the rich man also died, ‘ and he was buried in hell. And lifting up his eyes, ‘ when he was in torments, he saw Abraham afar off, ‘ and Lazarus in his bosom : and he cried, and said : ‘ Father Abraham, have mercy on me; and send La- ‘ zarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, ‘ to cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this ‘ flame. And Abraham said to him : Son, remember ‘ that thou didst receive good things in thy life time ; ‘ and likewise Lazarus evil things : but now he is ‘ comforted, and thou art tormented. And besides ‘ all this, between us and you, there is fixed a great ‘ chaos : so that they who would pass from hence to ‘ you cannot ; nor from thence come hither, &c.’ See here, my soul, a great difference in life ; between the rich man, abounding in all that this world could give, and living in pleasures and delights ; and the poor beggar, wanting even the necessaries of life, and languishing under a multitude of sores and ulcers : but look, and observe how quickly the scene is changed : and what a greater, and eternal difference immediately succeeds after death ; when the one is comforted with everlasting joy and happiness,

and the other plunged into the extremity of endless misery, where he cannot even be allowed one drop of water to cool his tongue.

Consider 2dly, what it was that brought the rich man to this place of eternal wo: since here is no mention in the gospel of any scandalous excesses that he was guilty of; no blasphemies, or perjuries, or profane swearing; no murders, no adulteries, or other impurities; no thefts, or rapines, or extortions; no slanders, or detraction, or lies; it is only said that *he was cloathed in purple and fine linen, and feasted sumptuously every day*; things, in which, considering his state and condition, the world apprehends no sin. What then can we suppose to have been the occasion of his damnation? O! Christians, his sins were chiefly sins of omission of the service of God: he led an idle life: he loved his pleasures more than God: he made a god of his belly; he had no concern for the poor: so that he lived in a continual breach of the two great commandments of loving God with his whole heart, and of loving his neighbour as himself: and certainly there needs no other sins to send any man to hell. See then, my soul, thou never flatter thyself with the imagination of thy being innocent; nor promise thyself any security; because thou art not guilty perhaps of the grosser sort of sins; whilst thou leadest an idle, unprofitable life, following the ways and maxims of worldlings; and loving the honours, riches, or pleasures of the world, better than God: for such a life as this can never bring any one to heaven: it is too remote from the narrow way that leads to life.

Consider 3dly, in the case of the poor beggar, the happy fruits of patient suffering; of a true conformity in all things to the will of God; and of always keeping one's self close to him, by recollection and divine love, in every place, occupation, or condition of life. For it was thus the poverty, and the pains of Lazarus were sanctified, and made the seeds of his eternal happiness. O that all such Christians,

as share in any part of his sufferings, were so wise and happy in their comportment under them, as to reap the like fruits for eternity from their temporal evils! But O it is the want of a lively faith of the great truths of God, delivered to us in the scriptures: it is the want of a true sense of the goods and evils of eternity: it is the want of seriously thinking and considering; is too often the bane both of the rich and of the poor: for otherwise, as our Lord here informs us, these scripture truths ought to influence us more powerfully towards the total change of our lives, than even if any person were to come from the dead to preach unto us.

Conclude to labour and pray for heavenly wisdom, to conduct thee in such manner, in the midst of the goods and evils of this transitory life: that both the one and the other may be made subservient to thy eternal happiness.

*On the charitable Samaritan. Luke x.*

Nov. 20. **C**ONSIDER first, that our Lord, to teach us that general charity which we owe to the whole world, without exception or distinction, of nation or opinion, proposes himself to us in this parable, as the perfect pattern of this charity, in the person of a Samaritan, a people differing both in nation and religion from the Jews. 'A certain man,' saith he, 'went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among robbers; who also stripped him, and having wounded him, went away leaving him half dead. And it chanced that a certain priest went down the same way, and seeing him, he passed by. In like manner also a Levite, when he was near the place, and saw him, passed by. But a certain Samaritan, being on his journey, came near him, and seeing him, was moved with compassion: and going up to him, bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine; and setting him upon his own beast, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And the next day he took out two-pence,

‘and gave them to the host, and said : take care of him; and whatsoever thou shalt spend over and above, I at my return will repay thee.’ See here, my soul, in this charitable Samaritan, an image of what thy Lord has done for thee : *and go thou*, as he tells thee, in the application of the parable, and *do in like manner* ; that is, shew thou the like mercy and charity to thy neighbours, as Christ has shewn to thee. This will be indeed a charity, both to them and to thyself; since it will bring thee *to possess eternal life*, v. 25. Yes, my soul, *this do, and thou shalt live*, v. 28.

Consider 2dly, in this parable, the wretched condition into which man was fallen by sin. Going down from *Jerusalem*, which is interpreted *the vision of peace*, to *Jerico*, which signifies *the moon*; (that is turning his back to his God, and to all true *peace*, to seek a false happiness in the forbidden fruit of worldly enjoyments, which are continually changing like *the moon*) he fell among robbers; that is, he fell into the hands of wicked spirits, and became their prey. He was stripped by them of all the gifts of grace with which he had been adorned by his Creator; and was grievously wounded in all his powers and faculties: his understanding was darkened with ignorance and error, in his notions of good and evil; and his will perverted with malice, in the preferring evil before good: all his passions were let loose upon him, having lost their bridle of original justice; and his whole soul was in a strange disorder; weak, beyond expression, to every thing that is good, and violently bent upon evil. Thus he lay *half dead*; his better part, *viz.* the soul being dead indeed, by the loss of its true life, the grace of God; and both the soul and the body, being condemned by divine justice to a second and eternal death: and in this state he was like to remain, being utterly incapable of himself of making one step towards his deliverance; and so must have inevitably perished to eternity, had not this charitable Samaritan came down from

heaven to his relief. O the dismal consequences of sin! O the infinite goodness of God! And shalt not thou, my soul, who hast had the experience both of the one and the other, from henceforth at least dread, detest, and fly, with all thy power, from that worst of evils, sin: and embrace henceforward, with all thy affections, this sovereign goodness of thy God?

Consider 3dly, by descending to particulars, what this infinite goodness has done, for lost man, in sending down his only Son to be our pious Samaritan, to deliver us from all our evils, and to impart all good to our souls. Alas! the priest, and the Levite passed us by; and left us languishing under all our wounds and miseries: for the law and its ministers were not able to heal, or to relieve us: but our good Samaritan had compassion on us; his tender mercies brought him down from his throne of glory, to our assistance. He has bound up our wounds, by suffering himself to be *wounded for our iniquities*; that *by his stripes we might be healed*. He has applied to our wounded souls the heavenly medicines of his sacraments, signified by the *wine* and *oil*. He has set us upon his own beast, by *bearing our sins himself in his own body, upon the tree* of the cross. He has brought us to the blessed inn of his holy church, where all graces and means of salvation, are abundantly furnished to all that ask, and seek for them. He has given the charge of our souls to the keeper of this inn, that is, to his Apostles and their successors, the pastors of this his holy church, divinely commissioned and assisted by him: and he has promised to them a most ample reward, for all eternity, to repay them for the care they shall take of us? O what return shall we make to our Lord, for all this mercy, and all this love he has thus shewn to us? O he desires no other return; but that we should love him, and shew mercy to one another.

Conclude to make him this return of love: but see it be with thy whole heart; for he will not accept

of a love that allows of any creature to stand in competition with him. See also thou never forget that there is no loving him without a sincere disposition of shewing mercy to thy neighbours, for his sake, and by his great example.

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*On the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin.*

Nov. 21. **C**ONSIDER first, that the church celebrates on this day the early dedication which the blessed Virgin made of herself to God, and to his eternal love and service: when, as we learn by a pious tradition, she was presented by her holy parents, St. Joachim and St. Ann, in the temple of the Lord; and remained there, in the company of other virgins, in an apartment allotted for that purpose, in one of the courts of the temple. Learn, my soul, from this presentation of the Blessed Virgin, the great advantages of early piety: and the happiness of dedicating one's self, from one's childhood, to divine love: as also the duty incumbent on all parents to present their children to God; to keep them at a distance from the contagion of bad company, and from all the false maxims and corrupt ways of a wicked world; and to train them up in the fear and love of God. The Blessed Virgin was brought by divine inspiration to the house of God, where she lived remote from the noise and distractions of the world; because she was to be the house where the Son of God himself would be incarnate, and the living temple in which he would live. Christians, do you desire that your souls should be also the house of God, and the living temples of his glory? It is by withdrawing yourselves, as much as possible, from the tumult and confusion of the world: it is by continually presenting yourselves to God, in his inward temple, by a spirit of recollection and mental prayer, that you are to attain to this happiness.

Consider 2dly, in this presentation of the Blessed Virgin; on the one hand, the voice of God, calling

her to his house, (in order to the disposing of her soul for the great things he was to work in her) in the words of the Psalm (xliv.) *Hear, O daughter, and see, and incline thine ear: and forget thy people, and thy father's house: and the king shall greatly desire thy beauty: for he is the Lord thy God: and him they shall adore.* And on the other hand, the devotion and fervour with which she corresponds with this call; the resolution with which she ascends the fifteen degrees, or steps, that led to the temple; resolving to ascend, in like manner, by all the degrees of virtue, to the very top of perfection; the profound adoration with which, prostrating herself upon the ground, she adored his Divine Majesty, at her first coming into his house; and the oblation she there makes of her whole self to his perpetual service. Learn, Christian souls, the like correspondence with divine grace, when it calls you to God; the like devotion, fervour, and resolution in his service; the like adoration and oblation of yourselves to him. In this sacred retreat, the Blessed Virgin gave the first example of a consecration of herself to God, by a vow of perpetual virginity, (as she was inspired to do by the Spirit of God) desiring in all things to choose the better part; and to render the sacrifice she made of her soul and body more perfect, more firm and secure, by the means of her vow. Learn of her a love for purity and chastity; and a resolution of preserving it, with all the perfection that thy condition of life shall allow of; and for this end daily beg the assistance of her prayers.

Consider 3dly, the exercises which the Blessed Virgin followed in the temple: for she certainly was not idle there. As the Holy Ghost continually visited and solicited her with his heavenly inspirations and graces, so she, who never received the grace of God in vain, continually opened the door of her heart to these visits, and cooperated with these graces with all her strength: and by this means, every day of her life, as she increased in age, so she

grew in virtue, grace, charity, and sanctity. And as to the employment of her time whilst she was in the temple, her whole life there was spent in ascending or descending by the mystical ladder of Jacob, (*Gen. xxviii. 12.*) which reacheth from the earth to heaven, and has God at the top of it. She ascended this ladder by employing a great part of her days in spiritual *reading, meditation, prayer, and contemplation*, which are named by St. Bernard for the steps or degrees of this heavenly ladder: and she descended again by the humble exercises of working with her hands for the service of the temple, for the use of her companions, or for the benefit of the poor: yet so, that even whilst her hands were employed at work, her heart was still with God by prayer and love. O how holy! O how happy is this kind of ascending and descending, by Jacob's ladder! Lord, give us grace to follow this great example, and to be always upon this ladder which conducts to heaven.

Conclude, O my soul, to imitate this presentation of the Blessed Virgin, by frequent oblations, at least, of thyself to God, every day of thy life. Be cautious indeed how thou engagest thyself by vow, without taking good counsel and mature deliberation, because of thy frailty: but as to making an offering of thy whole heart and soul to thy God, with all thy thoughts; words, and actions, it is what thou canst not do too often.

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*On the Pharisee and the Publican.* Luke xviii.

Nov. 22. **C**ONSIDER first, how our Lord spoke this parable to some who trusted in themselves as just, and despised others. 'Two men went up into the temple to pray: the one was a Pharisee, and the other a Publican. The Pharisee standing prayed thus with himself: O God, I give thee thanks, that I am not as the rest of men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, as also is this Publican. I fast twice in the week: I give tithes of all that I possess. And the Publican standing afar



‘ off, would not so much as lift up his eyes towards  
 ‘ heaven ; but struck his breast, saying : O God, be  
 ‘ merciful to me a sinner. I say to you, this man  
 ‘ went down to his house justified rather than the  
 ‘ other ; because every one that exalteth himself  
 ‘ shall be humbled : and he that humbleth himself  
 ‘ shall be exalted.’ This parable was spoken to some,  
*who trusted in themselves as just, and despised others.*  
 O my soul, beware of this unhappy disposition ;  
 dread these two most pernicious evils, of trusting in  
 thyself as just, and of despising others. Those that  
 are truly just, are far from thinking themselves so ;  
 they are far from glorying in themselves ; far from  
 attributing any thing of good to themselves, or pre-  
 ferring themselves before any one living. In the  
 judgment they make of themselves, they always *sit*  
*down*, according to the rule of their great Master, *in*  
*the lowest place* of all. Their eyes are ever open to  
 their own defects, and shut to those of others ; at  
 least where their duty does not require their inspec-  
 tion, or correction of them. They are convinced  
 that they have nothing in themselves that they can  
 trust to ; and that it is only owing to God’s great  
 mercy, that they have not been guilty of the most  
 enormous crimes that any poor wretch has ever com-  
 mitted : and therefore they never presume to despise  
 any one, not even the most scandalous sinner ; lest  
 they should be found worse than him in the sight of  
 God, through their pride and self-conceit : crimes,  
 which they know to be always an *abomination to*  
*the Lord.* See, my soul, if these be thy senti-  
 ments.

Consider 2dly, that it was this pride and self-  
 conceit, that is here condemned in the Pharisee :  
 and which was the cause of his condemnation. He  
 was of the number of those that *trusted in themselves*  
*as just, and despised all others.* He was full of him-  
 self. In his prayer, he neither craved mercy, nor  
 grace of God : he asked for nothing ; because he  
 took himself to be *rich, and wealthy, and not to stand*

*in need of any thing*: whereas, indeed, through his pride, *he was wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked*, Apoc. iii. 17. His whole prayer was only an enumeration of his own good works; with a censure upon the rest of men, and a condemnation of the poor publican. And as he asked for nothing, so he obtained nothing; but only carried home with him his own condemnation. See, my soul, the sad consequences of pride, and its particular opposition to the spirit of prayer: and learn to detest with all thy power, and to drive far from thee, an evil that is so detestable in the sight of God, whom it sacrilegiously robs of his glory; and so pernicious to the souls of men, whom it transforms into devils, and condemns to hell.

Consider 3dly, the lessons we are to learn from the example of the publican, set before us by our Lord in this parable, for our imitation. He had a true sense of his sins, and of what he had deserved for his sins: and therefore he condemned himself, as unworthy to lift up his eyes to heaven, or to come near to the altar of God; but standing afar off, with his countenance humbly cast down upon the ground, he struck his breast, saying: *O God, be merciful to me a sinner*. Now this profound humility, this great sense of sorrow and contrition for his sins, which accompanied his prayer, was that which procured him a favourable audience, and a ready discharge from all his sins. His prayer was heard, because it was presented, and recommended by *a contrite and humble heart*; and by the efficacy of it he went home justified: whilst the proud Pharisee, who was so full of the conceit of his own good works, met with nothing but his condemnation. O let us learn these great lessons of humility, and of a perfect contrition for our sins: let us, as often as we go up to the temple of God to pray, carry with us this sacrifice of a contrite and humble heart, and we shall not fail of meeting with the like mercy as the publican did.

Conclude to study well these lessons, so much recommended, and so frequently inculcated, by our Lord in the gospel. O! ever remember that humility, and contrition of heart, bring us to God; but pride and self-conceit carry us far away from him. *For he resists the proud, and gives grace to the humble,* St. James iv. 6.

*On the Parable of the Grain of Mustard-Seed.*

Matt. xiii. 31.

Nov. 23. **C**ONSIDER first, that under this humble similitude, of so small a thing as a grain of mustard-seed, great and divine truths are delivered to us by Truth itself, when he tells us that *the kingdom of heaven is like unto a grain of mustard seed.* *The kingdom of heaven*, in the gospel, is taken in three different ways; sometimes for God's eternal kingdom, to which the just are invited, (Matt. xxv. 34.) *Come ye blessed of my Father, possess the kingdom prepared for you, &c.* of which also it is said, (Matt. xiii. 43.) *The just shall shine as the sun, in the kingdom of their Father.* At other times *the kingdom of heaven* is taken for the Church of Christ, in which he reigns for ever, as in his kingdom; and the institution and intention of which is to bring men to heaven: and thus the kingdom of heaven is likened to a net cast into the sea, and gathering together all kind of fishes, &c. Matt. xiii. 47. And to ten virgins who went out with their lamps to meet the bridegroom, (Matt. xxv. &c.) and of this kingdom it is said, that our Lord shall send his angels, (at the end of the world) and they shall gather out of his kingdom all scoundals, and them that work iniquity; and shall cast them into the furnace of fire, &c. At other times again the kingdom of heaven is taken for the kingdom by which God reigns, by faith, grace, and love, in the souls of good Christians: and thus *the kingdom of heaven* is likened to a treasure hidden in a field; and to a pearl of great price, (Matt. xiii. 44. 46.); and of this kingdom it is said, (Luke

*On the Parable of the Grain of Mustard-Seed. 3:9*

xvii. 21.) *Lo the kingdom of God is within you. Now the kingdom of heaven, according to all these three acceptations, is likened to a little grain of mustard seed; because all our good, faith itself, grace, and all our happiness, both for time and eternity, is grounded on humility; we must be little and humble upon earth; we must become as little children, or we shall never enter into the kingdom of heaven, Matt. xviii. 3.*

Consider 2dly, how well this similitude agrees to the spiritual kingdom of Christ in his church. Take a view of the beginnings of this *kingdom of heaven* in a few poor fishermen, utterly destitute of any one of those advantages that might recommend them, according to the world: see its very founder himself, a poor man, rejected, condemned, and put to a most disgraceful death by public authority, at the unanimous desire of both the senate, and the people of his own nation: then observe the most fundamental principles and practices, upon which this kingdom was first founded and established: its doctrines most shocking to human pride; its maxims and precepts most insupportable to the natural inclinations of flesh and blood; and you shall find in all this the resemblance of the *mustard seed*; small, mean, inconsiderable, and contemptible in the eyes of the world. But then observe how quickly this little grain, after it had been buried, as it were, in the earth, sprung up, and even grew into a large tree, which spread its branches far and near; by the wonderful progress the church and kingdom of Christ made in a short time over all the earth: see the many thousands of martyrs and other saints, of all states and conditions, it quickly produced; with innumerable examples of the most heroic virtues, such as none of the schools or sects of the philosophers, or any of the ancient or modern sages of the world, with all their learning and eloquence, and all their pretensions to wisdom, could never come up to. And in all this admire and adore the wonderful ways of God, who ever delights

in shewing forth his greatness, in things that are little; and in choosing the foolish things of the world, and such as are weak, mean, and contemptible in the eyes of the world, to be the instruments of his greatest works.

Consider 3dly, that this grain of mustard seed is also very expressive of *the kingdom of God*; by which he reigns by grace in our souls. The beginnings of this kingdom are small, like the mustard seed; the very first foundations of it must be laid by humility, of which the mustard seed is the emblem; for a *contrite and humble heart* is the most essential ingredient of the conversion of the soul to God, without which the kingdom of divine grace can never be established in the soul. Then this divine grace, like the grain of mustard seed, before it can spring up, and produce the tree of Christian perfection, must first be sown, and as it were buried in the earth, by letting it sink deep into the soul, and by harbouring it there, by the means of serious and frequent meditations, and the practice of mental prayer. For it is thus only that the soul can be qualified to grow up in all Christian virtues, till she become herself the kingdom of God, and a kind of heaven upon earth; the very temple, in which God chooses to dwell; the house of God, and the house of prayer. And thus the little grain of seed will grow into a great tree.

Conclude with a serious resolution to seek henceforward, in good earnest, this kingdom of heaven, represented by the mustard seed; which, as thou here seest, is not out of thy reach, since it may be found here upon earth, and that too, without going any farther to seek it, than into thy own interior; where, if thou properly seek it by recollection and mental prayer, thou shalt quickly come at it, and be put in the possession of it; and all good things shall come to thee together with it.

*On the Parable of the ten Virgins, Matt. xxv.*

Nov. 24. **C**ONSIDER first, that these ten virgins, in this parable, represent to us the state of Christians in this mortal pilgrimage. We are all, by our vocation or calling to the Christian faith, appointed to go forth with our lamps to meet the bridegroom : because the business of a Christian, in this life, is to make the best of his way, by the help of the light of faith, towards his God, and a happy eternity; and to be always in readiness for the coming of Christ, the great bridegroom of our souls. The *lamps*, with which we are to go forth to meet Christ, are *the light of faith*, of all the divine truths of the Christian religion ; the *oil*, with which these *lamps* are to be kept burning, are the *works of faith* ; that is, the good works, prescribed by the gospel, and particularly the works of mercy and charity, and the love of God above all things. When this *oil* is wanting, the *lamps* are extinguished, because *faith without good works is dead*. And thrice unhappy they, who at the approaches of that uncertain hour of their departure hence, when they shall be suddenly called upon, as in the middle of the night, to go forth to meet the bridegroom, shall find no *oil* in their *lamps* ! Alas ! where shall they then go to buy it ? In all appearance, before *they shall be in a condition to procure any, the bridegroom will come* : and take along with him those whom he finds *ready*, to his wedding feast ; and shut the door against all the rest, never, never to be opened, to all eternity.

Consider 2dly, that all Christians belong to one or other of these two companies, represented in this parable under the denomination of *wise* and *foolish virgins*. The good are *truly wise*, because they are *wise* according to God : and they are *wise* in order to eternity, inasmuch as they wisely provide for eternity. But O how truly foolish are the wicked, and all the children of Babylon, who continually forget both God and eternity ! For what greater folly, or what greater madness can there be, than to believe

as Christians, and to live as infidels; to expect to go to heaven by the road that leads to hell; to be daily preferring darkness before light, slavery before liberty, misery before happiness, Satan before God, by preferring the state of sin before the state of grace? In a word, what can be more foolish, than blindly to exchange all that is really good, both in time and eternity, for the very worst of evils, and such as shall never have an end? And yet, alas! as we daily see, *the number of such fools as these is infinite.* But the folly, that is here particularly censured in this parable, is that of Christians that make no provision of the oil of good works for the nourishment of their lamps, but go out to meet their Lord, with expectation of being admitted by him to his eternal feast, with Christian faith, without Christian charity; with believing in God, without loving God, and keeping of his commandments. Ah, my soul, take good care thou never be so *foolish.*

Consider 3dly, that the great lesson designed for us in this parable, is expressed in those words, with which our Lord concludes: *Watch ye, therefore, because you know not the day nor the hour.* The bridegroom in the parable, came *in the middle of the night*, that is, at a time when he was least expected; according to what he has often signified, that he shall come *like a thief in the night*; and that we shall not know the hour of his coming. Not that he desires to surprise us; for if he did, he would not so often warn us: but that he desires we should *always watch*, and be always ready, that so we may never be surprised. *What I say to you*, said he to his disciples, *I say to all: watch.* And again: *Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord when he cometh, shall find watching: Amen I say to you, that he will gird himself, and make them sit down to meat, and passing he will minister to them,* Luke xii. 37. O who can express or conceive the greatness of these heavenly rewards, of these highest honours, of these never-ending joys; signified here by our Lord's ministering, in this manner, himself

to the servants whom he shall *find watching* ! But O the dismal case, on the other hand, of all them that, instead of *watching*, and being always *ready*, are quite *asleep* as to all that relates to God and their souls : and are not awakened, either with the love or fear of God, till death opens their eyes, when it is too late : and then, like the foolish virgins, they find the door shut against them, and are sent away, with *I know you not*, into the exterior darkness.

Conclude to bear always in mind this indispensable duty of watching ; so frequently inculcated by the Son of God ; that so thou mayest never be surprised, and *sleep in death*. Carry always with thee the lamp of faith, to enlighten thee ; but never forget that this light must be kept in with the oil of good works.

*On the Parable of the Talents.* Matt. xxv.

Nov. 25. **C**ONSIDER first, how our Lord, in this parable, likens himself to *a man going into a far country, who called his servants, and delivered to them his goods : and to one he gave five talents, and to another two, and to another one ; to every one according to his proper ability : and immediately he took his journey.* Our Lord, by his ascension, is gone into heaven, a far country indeed, from this wretched earth, on which we dwell. But *ascending on high, he led captivity captive : he gave gifts to men*, Eph. iv. 1. He has plentifully distributed his goods and talents amongst his servants ; to the end that they might trade with them, and improve the stock, during the time of his absence, till he shall come again, and take an account of their good or evil management of their trust. He is the universal Lord of all : he distributes his talents amongst us all, according to his good pleasure. All whatsoever we have, as to soul or body, nature or grace, all belongs to him. We have nothing but what we have received from him : nor any thing but what we are accountable for to him. And those that have received more than their neighbours, have no-



thing to be proud of; for *what hast thou*, says the apostle, (1 Cor. iv. 7.) *that thou hast not received? And if thou hast received it, why dost thou glory?* On the contrary, those that have received more, ought to be so much the more humble, and to fear so much the more: because they are accountable for so much the more: for where more is given, more will be required. Christians, have you been rightly sensible of these truths? Have you considered your wit, your advantages of soul or body, your fortune, as you call it, your very time, and all other gifts, either of nature, or of grace, as talents deposited in your hands? Have you ever seriously thought of the strict account you must one day give of them all?

Consider 2dly, the different use that these servants made of their master's money. For *he that had received the five talents, went his way, and traded with the same, and gained other five: and in like manner, he that had received the two, gained other two. But he that had received the one, going his way, digged in the earth, and hid his Lord's money.* The two former are proposed for our imitation; that by the like industry, in corresponding with divine grace, and employing in a proper manner all the gifts of God, and laying hold on every opportunity of good, we may continually advance in virtue; and like these good and faithful servants, may improve and double our stock. O how happy shall we be, if we shall trade in this manner, with the talents committed to our charge! And though one of these servants gained five talents, and the other but two: yet as the latter, who had received but two, was no less industrious than the former; gaining as much in proportion as he; so as to double his stock as well as he: we find him rewarded in like manner; and the same eulogium given to him by his master: *Well done thou good and faithful servant: because thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will set thee over many things, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord*, ver. 23. O what encouragement is here, for those who have received talents: since we see, if they make proper use of

what they have received, they shall be rewarded equally with them that have received more! But O the sublime reward that is here set before us, in these words: *Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.* For what is this *joy of our Lord?* O nothing less than the everlasting possession of himself; an universal, incomprehensible, eternal good.

Consider 3dly, how he, that buried his master's money, is here condemned, both as a *slothful*, and a *wicked* servant: as a warning to all such Christians, as having received talents, that is, gifts, graces, or advantages of any kind, from God, do not employ them to his greater honour and glory, or to their own or their neighbours improvement, or advancement in good; but through sloth and indolence, let them lie unregarded, and as it were hidden, and buried in the earth: even in this unhappy earth of the world, and the flesh, which engages all their thoughts and affections, more than the honour and glory of their Lord, or the eternal welfare of their own dear souls. But see where all this is like soon to end, by the sentence pronounced against this naughty servant: *Take ye away the talent from him, and give it to him that hath the ten talents. For to every one that hath shall be given, and he shall abound: but from him that hath not, that also which he seemeth to have, shall be taken away. And the unprofitable servant cast ye out into the exterior darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.* But if the unprofitable servant come off so ill, who only buried his master's money, what will become of so many thousands, who do not content themselves with making no good use of the talents they are entrusted with; but squander them away, and even pervert and turn them all against their Master, by making them the instruments of sin? O my soul, hast thou never been so unhappy?

Conclude to look well to thyself, by taking an account of all the talents deposited in thy hands; and examining well what use thou hast made of them to this day: to the end, that if they have been hitherto

either buried, or abused, thou mayest now at least may begin to employ them in such manner, as may entitle thee to the approbation of thy great Master ; rather than to be condemned, as a wicked or slothful servant, to the eternal loss, both of thy talents, and of thy soul.

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*On the Parable of the Vineyard, let out to Husbandmen. Matt. xxi. 33.*

Nov. 26. **C**ONSIDER first, what our Lord here tells us ; that *there was a certain householder, who planted a vineyard, and made a hedge round about it, and dug in it a wine-press, and built a tower : and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a strange country.* This householder represents to us God himself : and this vineyard, which he has planted, is his universal church. But see, my soul, what care he has bestowed upon this vineyard : fencing it in with his excellent laws, and his perpetual protection, as with a *hedge* ; digging in it a *wine-press*, by the institution of his divine sacraments, the sources of his heavenly grace, pressed out for us from the sacred wounds of our crucified Saviour ; and building in its favour a *tower*, in which he might watch over it by his extraordinary providence, as well to keep evils away from it, as to provide it with all good. This vineyard he lets out to husbandmen ; that is, to all men, inasmuch as he has given to all men a part, or a share, in which each one is to labour ; to wit, in his own soul at least, and the souls of as many others as he has committed to his charge. And having done this, he withdraws himself, as it were, into a strange country ; by keeping himself out of our sight during the time of our mortal life, and patiently waiting for the fruit of this his vineyard, which we are to furnish in due season. O what lessons have we here, as well with regard to the goodness of our God on the one hand, in all that he has done for this vineyard, and for every part of it, and consequently for every Christian soul ; as with re-

gard to our indispensable duty on the other hand, of corresponding with this his goodness, by our labours, in producing, and furnishing the fruit he expects!

Consider 2dly, with regard to thyself, what this great Lord has done for the vineyard of thy soul in particular; by innumerable favours and graces in every kind, which he has bestowed upon thee all thy life long, till this very hour; and by many happy opportunities of good, which he has afforded thee, (which, if duly embraced by thee, might have made thee a saint) beyond what he has granted to thousands of others. Then see if he may not say of thee what he said heretofore of his vineyard of Jerusalem, (Isai. v. 4.) *What is there that I ought to do more for my vineyard, that I have not done to it?* But after all this care on his part, what fruit hast thou hitherto produced for him? Alas! may he not justly complain of thee, as he did of that Jewish vineyard, that instead of the good grapes, which he looked for from thee, thou hast only brought forth wild grapes? O dread then what he threatens in the same place, in consequence of his being thus disappointed; in the words that immediately follow. *I will shew you, said he, what I will do to my vineyard. I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be wasted: I will break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down: and I will make it desolate. It shall not be pruned, and it shall not be digged: but briars and thorns shall come up: and I will command the clouds to rain no rain upon it.* Can any thing be more terrible than these threats of the soul's being thus abandoned, and given up to a reprobate sense, in punishment of her still bringing forth no good fruit, after so many repeated favours and graces?

Consider 3dly, in this parable, how the Lord of the vineyard sent at different times his servants to the husbandmen to receive the fruits of it: but they

persecuted them, and put them to death ; till at length he sent his only Son, whom they used in like manner. In punishment of which, *he brought these evil men to an evil end, and let his vineyard to other husbandmen, that should render him the fruit in due season.* This was literally verified in the Jews, to whom this parable was addressed by our Lord, a few days before his passion. God sent to them at divers times his servants the prophets, to call for the fruits of his vineyard ; but they returned him no fruits : they even persecuted his messengers, and put several of them to death. At length he sent them his only Son : and him they cast off, condemned to death, and crucified. And therefore, as our Lord here foretels, *the kingdom of God* (that is, the vineyard of his church) *has been long ago taken away from them, to be given to a nation,* (that is to the Gentiles) *that should bring forth the fruits thereof.* But all this is applicable, more or less, to the particular vineyard of the soul of each Christian. Wherefore as to thy own part, O my soul, reflect how far thou hast imitated those unhappy husbandmen, in refusing to render to the Lord of thy vineyard, in due season, the fruits which he has so often called for, at thy hands, by his messengers ; that is, by his preachers, by his word, by his inspirations, by reproaches of conscience, &c. and in persecuting those whom he sent to thee, by wilfully resisting his graces, stifling his inspirations, and setting at naught all them who sought to bring thee to good. Alas ! hast thou not, by thy obstinacy in sin, as much as lay in thee, even crucified again the Son of God. O take heed, lest if thou go on in this perversity, thou fall under the like sentence as the Jews did, of being brought to an evil end, and the kingdom of God be taken away from thee, and given to another.

Conclude to look well to the vineyard of thy soul, that it may, by due correspondence with divine grace, bring forth its fruit in due season : even such

good grapes as may be acceptable to the great Lord, who has let out this vineyard to thee, and who ceases not to furnish thee with all proper helps to make it fruitful.

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*On the merciful Dealings of Christ our Lord with Sinners.*

Nov. 27. **C**ONSIDER first, how Christ our Lord, whilst he was here visible upon earth, was pleased in a particular manner to shew favour and mercy to poor sinners, and to express on all occasions his loving-kindness to them. Insomuch that the Scribes and Pharisees, who being full of a conceit of their own justice, despised sinners, and kept them at a distance, saying, *depart from me, come not near me; because thou art unclean,* (Isai. lxxv. 5.) were ever objecting to this merciful Lord, that he suffered *sinners to draw near unto him: that he received sinners, and did eat with them: and that he was a friend to publicans and sinners, &c.* Unhappy men, who did not understand, that his infinite mercy and charity had brought him down from heaven, on purpose to seek and to save sinners! And still more unhappy, in proudly taking themselves to be just, and not sinners; and therefore rejecting him, *who came not to call the just, but sinners,* (Matt. ix. 13.) vainly imagining they had no need of him. Christians, see here, and admire, embrace and love, the great mercy of your Redeemer, and his tender bowels of compassion for poor sinners: and how much soever you may be involved in sin, assure yourselves that he is ever ready to receive you; if you will repent in a proper manner, and return to him. But O beware of the blindness of the Pharisees, and of a vain conceit of your own justice! For the first step towards your obtaining mercy, must be an humble sense of your sins, and of the great need you have of mercy.

Consider 2dly, the many instances recorded in the gospel, of this merciful disposition of Christ our

Lord in favour of sinners. As in his calling them to him, (*Matt. xi 28.*) and even making them his disciples, as in the case of Matthew, &c. and his frequently conversing most familiarly with them. To which add those remarkable examples of Magdalene, (*Luke vii.*) of the Samaritan woman, (*John iv.*) of the woman taken in adultery, (*John viii.*) of the woman of Canaan, (*Matt. xv.*) of Zacheus, (*Luke xix.*) and of the thief upon the cross, (*Luke xxiii.*) And as both in his life, and at his death, so after his resurrection also, he gave the like proofs of his loving kindness, and his tender mercies to sinners, in the favour he shewed both to Magdalene, and to Peter (who had so lately denied him) by making them his first visits, after his rising from the dead. O what encouragements are here, O my soul, for us to look for the like mercy from this same Lord, who is still as rich in mercy as ever! But then we must remember to go to him with the like dispositions of faith and repentance, love and humility, as these happy penitents did; and to take care, like them, to return no more to our sins.

Consider 3dly, the parables, by which our Lord has shewed forth to us, in a most lively manner, his infinite goodness and mercy to poor sinners: as for instance, that of the *good shepherd*, (*Luke xv.*) who having lost one of his sheep, leaves the rest of his flock, and goes in quest of that which is lost, and ceases not to seek it, till he has found it: and when he has found it, he lays it upon his shoulders with joy; and coming home, calls together his friends and his neighbours, saying: rejoice with me, because I have found my sheep that was lost. In like manner that of the charitable Samaritan, who shewed such tender mercy to the man that had fallen among thieves; and that of the father of the prodigal child, who received so kindly and lovingly his ungracious son, returning home to him. In all which, my soul, thou mayest see a lively and a lovely image of that tender mercy, compassion, and goodness, which thy Re-

deemer has so often exercised, and continues daily to exercise, in favour of sinners. But what can he think too much of all that he does for them, for whom he has even shed the last drop of his blood? O blessed be his mercy for ever, which is continually working such wonders for poor sinners! Ah, my soul, were it not for these wonders of his mercy, we should long since have dwelt in hell!

Conclude to lay hold of this mercy of thy Saviour whilst thou hast time; by turning thyself away from all thy sins, from this very hour, and running to this Father of mercies; and dedicating thyself eternally to his service. For why shouldst thou any longer abuse his goodness and love, by obstinacy in sin: or run the risk of provoking his justice, to revenge upon thee the contempt of his mercy?

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*On the Conversion of Zacheus.* Luke xix.

Nov. 28. **C**ONSIDER first, how, when our Lord was walking through the city of Jerico, *there was a man there named Zacheus, who was the chief of the publicans, and he was rich; and he sought to see Jesus, who he was, and he could not for the crowd, because he was low of stature. And he ran before, and climbed up into a sycamore tree, that he might see him, for he was to pass that way.* See here, Christians, the first step towards this wonderful conversion of a rich worldling: that is, of one of that sort of men which is usually the most remote from the kingdom of God. 1. He desired to see Jesus who he was. Good desires are the first beginning of all our good: these incline us to seek to see Jesus, and to come at him by true wisdom, which consists in truly knowing him, what he is in himself, and what he is in regard to us. Now the beginning of this true wisdom, as we learn from the Spirit of God in the Scriptures, is an earnest desire after it: and this is seeking, like Zacheus, to see who Jesus is. 2. He was low of stature, and could not see Jesus for the crowd: and therefore he ran before, and climbed up



into a sycamore tree, that he might see him : for he was to pass that way. Alas ! poor sinners, we are also low of stature, through our unhappy weakness, and manifold miseries : we are hindered from seeing Jesus, *by the crowd* ; that is, by the distractions, worldly solitudes, disorderly affections of our heart, and dissipation of thought, in which we live, and by the tumult of our passions ; and therefore, in order to see and know him, we must get out of the crowd, by retirement and recollection of thought ; we must run before, by a disengagement of our heart from worldly affections ; we must climb up the *sycamore* (the name of which implies a *silly fig-tree*) by treading under our feet the false maxims of worldly wisdom and human respects, and embracing the maxims of the gospel, which the world calls foolishness. We must get above the heads of the worldly crowd, by climbing up the tree of the cross, which the world despises and abhors ; and then we shall be able to know Jesus, and to contemplate him ; for that is the way by which he passes.

Consider 2dly, that *when Jesus came to the place, he looked up, and saw him, and said to him : Zacheus, make haste and come down : for to day I must abide in thy house. And he made haste and came down, and received him with joy. And when they all saw it they murmured, saying : that he was gone to be a guest with a man that is a sinner.* See here, Christians, how true that is of the wise man, (*Wisd. vi. 13, &c.*) that wisdom is easily seen by them that love her, and is found by them that seek her, and preventeth them that covet her, so that she first sheweth herself unto them. Our Lord does not only suffer himself to be seen by this publican, but he looks up at him ; he calls to him to make haste, and to come down to him : he even invites himself into his house to be his guest, and brings along with him salvation into that house. O the happy consequences of seeking to see and to know Jesus ; and of getting out of the crowd, into the sycamore tree, to contemplate him ! But then we must

also learn from the example of Zacheus, a ready correspondence with the grace of our Lord, when he looks up and calls : we must not let him go away on this occasion ; we must make haste, and come down to him without delay : we must accept of the favour of the visit he offers us, with thankfulness : we must conduct him with joy into our inward house ; we must make him welcome there, by a proper entertainment of devotion and love : thus he will bring *salvation* with him *to our house*.

Consider 3dly, what entertainment Zacheus offered to our Lord, when he had received him into his house : *Behold, Lord, said he, the half of my goods I give to the poor : and if I have wronged any man of any thing, I return him fourfold.* He made a sacrifice to him upon the spot of his predominant passion, even of that love of the mammon of iniquity, which before had been his idol. He gave up at once all his worldly riches, which were so near his heart, to be employed either in alms, or in making restitution fourfold for all ill-gotten goods. He laid down all his sins at the feet of his Saviour, with a sincere detestation and repentance of them all ; and a firm resolution to return to them no more ; but to make the best satisfaction he could for them. Now this was the most agreeable feast he could make for our Lord, who was pleased immediately to declare : *This day is salvation come to this house : because he also is a son of Abraham : for the son of man is come to seek and so save that which was lost.* O what comfort was here for Zacheus ! O what encouragement for us poor sinners, to imitate the readiness and sincerity of his conversion, that we may also with him be acknowledged for *true sons of Abraham*, by following the example of his faith, obedience ; and sacrifice ; and that the like salvation may come also to our house, from him, who ever delights in seeking and saving that which was lost !

Conclude to consider the conversion of Zacheus as a model of a perfect conversion, and to strive to imitate it in every part. Often invite Christ into thy

house, and entertain him there in spirit : but see that thou make him a proper feast, even as Zacheus did ; by sacrificing to him the dearest affections of thy heart ; and never let him go without giving his blessing to thy house.

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*On Christ's weeping over Jerusalem.* Luke xix.

Nov. 29. **C**ONSIDER first, how our Lord, coming for the last time to visit Jerusalem, a few days before his passion, *when he drew near, seeing the city he wept over it, saying : if thou also hadst known, and that in this thy day, the things that are for thy peace : but now they are hidden from thy eyes. For the days shall come upon thee : and thy enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and straiten thee on every side, and beat thee flat to the ground, and thy children who are in thee : and they shall not leave in thee a stone upon a stone : because thou hast not known the time of thy visitation.* Our Lord in this his last coming to Jerusalem, is accompanied with crowds of people, bearing branches of palms in their hands, and welcoming him with Hosannas of joy : but his attention is engaged by the melancholy object he has before his eyes of that unhappy city, and of all the evils that were coming upon it, which he bewails in this pathetic manner. Not that the beating down of stone walls, or the destroying of houses, was a matter worthy of the tears of the Son of God : nor yet that men, who are all doomed to die, should die a little before their time : but the miseries which he lamented were of another kind : *viz.* the blindness and the hardness of heart of the inhabitants of this city, so highly favoured by his visits ; their extreme ingratitude, and their obstinacy in sin ; and that final reprobation and eternal damnation, which they were quickly drawing down upon their own heads, by their repeated abuses, and wilful resistance of those extraordinary graces, which he offered them at this time of their visitation. Christians, beware ; lest the like abuses of divine

grace should draw down the like judgments on you also.

Consider 2dly, that you have at present *your day*, as Jerusalem had then. This is *your day*; a time of mercy and grace: in which the Son of God daily visits you, by many gracious calls and inspirations: his sacraments, and sacrifice, the fountains of your Saviour, are now continually open for you; together with all manner of helps for your salvation. But what use do you make of this *your day*? For it is short, and will quickly be at an end: and then *the day of the Lord* must take place. Have you a right sense and *knowledge, in this your day, of the things that are for your peace, and for your true welfare*? Do the things of God and eternity make a due impression on your souls? Is the conduct of your life regulated by them? Or are not these great truths, through your own fault, *hidden at present from your eyes*? O take care, lest if you pass by unregarded this *time of your visitation*, as Jerusalem did, *the days should suddenly come upon you also, when your spiritual enemies shall cast a trench about you, and straiten you on every side, and beat you flat to the ground, &c. viz. when the sorrows of death shall encompass you, and the perils of hell shall find you;* and the grace of God, which you have so long abused, shall leave you in the hands of your enemies.

Consider 3dly, how our Saviour, after weeping over Jerusalem, and denouncing to it its final desolation, *entering into the temple, began to cast them out that sold therein, and them that bought: saying to them: it is written, my house is a house of prayer: but you have made it a den of thieves, Luke xix. 45.* Giving us to understand by this proceeding, on this occasion, that the profanation of the house of God, and of sacred things, the love of gain more than of holiness, and a gross neglect of prayer and other religious duties, is the high road to blindness and hardness of heart, and consequently to a dreadful and

eternal reprobation. Christians, take care, lest imitating in these particulars the guilt of the Jews, you draw upon your heads the like punishments. The soul of every Christian ought to be *the temple of the living God*, (2 Cor. vi. 16.) and in that quality *the house of prayer*. O take care you never be so unhappy as to turn this house of prayer into a den of thieves: by shutting out from hence the fear and love of God; and letting in sin and Satan.

Conclude to attend, *in this your day, to the things that appertain to your peace*: and not to neglect *the time of your visitation*: lest by a want of corresponding with grace, you be so unhappy as to fill up the measure of your sins; and suddenly to fall, when you least expect it, *into the hands of the living God*.

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On St. Andrew.

Nov. 30. **C**ONSIDER first, the lessons we are to learn from the example of this great Saint. St. Andrew, before he came to Christ, was a disciple of St. John the Baptist (*John* i. 35. 43.) trained up to devotion and penance in that excellent school of the great fore-runner of our Lord. See, my soul, the great advantages of early piety, and of a saint like education! *It is good for a man*, saith the prophet, *when he hath borne the yoke from his youth*, Lament. iii. 27. And, *It is a proverb*, saith Solomon, (*Prov.* xxii. 6.) *a young man according to his way, even when he is old, he will not depart from it*. St. John, the true friend of the bridegroom, who sought not his own honour and glory, but the spiritual advantage of his disciples, directed them to Jesus. St. Andrew and another, heard him say of our Lord: *Behold the Lamb of God*: and they presently followed him, and accompanied him to the place of his abode, and there they staid with him that day. O what entertainment did he give them! O what heavenly conversation did they there enjoy! Christians, see you take care to fit up a lodging for Christ in your own interior; and invite him in thither; and

entertain him there, by the exercise of recollection and of mental prayer: and you may also be so happy as to relish the admirable sweetness of his divine conversation.

Consider 2dly, that St. Andrew had no sooner found Christ himself; but he endeavoured immediately to impart the same happiness to his brother Simon, and forthwith brought him to our Lord? Happy they that having found Jesus, and relished his sweetness, endeavour, like St. Andrew, to bring their brethren also to him! according to that of the Scripture, (*Apoc. xxii. 17.*) *Let him that heareth say Come;* that is, let him that heareth the sweet voice and invitation of the Spirit of God in his own soul, calling him to Christ, invite as many others as he can, and bring them along with him. But though these two brothers began now to be acquainted with our Lord, and to believe in him, they had not as yet left all to follow him: this grace was reserved for another time; when, as we read, (*Matt. iv. 18.*) *Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea, (for they were fishermen) and he saith to them: Come after me, and I will make you to be fishers of men, and they immediately leaving their nets followed him.* Learn, Christians, from this example, a ready correspondence with the calls and graces of God; even though he should call upon you to leave all you possess, and to follow him: how much more when he calls for a much easier sacrifice: such as the giving up for the love of him, some petty toy, or worldly bauble, which has taken possession of your heart. Alas! the affections to these fooleries are like nets, from which you must be disengaged, before you can truly follow Christ.

Consider 3dly, that from this time, St. Andrew stuck close to our Lord, as his individual companion and disciple: and after his ascension into heaven, employed his whole life in propagating, by his las-

hours, by his preaching, and by his miracles, the glory of his master's name, and his blessed kingdom; and in procuring salvation to innumerable souls. Neither did he cease, till after many sufferings and tribulations, (the usual portions of the disciples of Christ) he laid down his life for the love of his Lord, following him faithfully and constantly unto death, even to the death of the cross. But O with what affection did he salute the cross prepared for him; when, according to the acts of his martyrdom, coming within sight of that happy instrument which was to send him to his God, he cried out: *O, good cross, which hast received beauty, and glory, from bearing the body of my Lord! O cross which I have long desired, tenderly loved, and continually sought after, and which now at length art here prepared to satisfy my longing soul, receive me now into thy embraces; take me away from amongst mortals, and conduct me to my master: that through thee he may receive me, who redeemed me, by dying on thee.* Christians, what are your dispositions in regard to the cross prepared for you? There is no going to heaven for you by any other way than that of the cross. Are you sensible of this? Do you, like St. Andrew, lovingly embrace this blessed instrument, which is to bring you to your God, and to a happy eternity? Two considerations in particular recommended the cross to St. Andrew, for the object of his affection and love; viz. the example of his master, who had sanctified the cross by his own sufferings and death: and the cross's being the sovereign means of divine appointment to bring him to his master, and to unite him eternally to him. O let the like considerations recommend the cross also to your love and affection!

Conclude to labour to imitate the virtues of St. Andrew: more especially his early piety, his attention to all the divine calls, his ready correspondence with the grace of God, his constant adhesion to Christ, and his dedicating his whole life to his love

and service; and the pious dispositions of his soul with relation to the cross. There is no better way of honouring the saints, than by endeavouring to be saints, by an imitation of their lives.

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*On the Time of Advent.*

Dec. 1. **C**ONSIDER first, that the time of *Advent* (so called from being set aside by the church for worthily celebrating the *advent*, that is, the *coming* of Christ) is a penitential time, and a time of devotion; in which we are every day called upon by the church of God, to *prepare the way of the Lord, to make straight his paths*: to enter into the like dispositions to those which St. John the Baptist required of the people, when he was sent to preach to them conversion and penance, in order to prepare them for their Messiah; that so we also, by turning away now from our sins, by sorrow and repentance, and turning ourselves to the Lord our God with our whole heart, by love and affection; may dispose our souls to welcome our Saviour, whose birth we are about to celebrate; and to embrace in such manner the mercy and grace, which he brings with him at his first coming, as to escape hereafter those dreadful judgments, which his justice shall execute upon impenitent sinners, at his second coming. See then, my soul, that thou dedicate this holy time to suitable exercises of devotion and penance, that thou mayest answer the end of this institution.

Consider 2dly, in what manner we are all summoned, by the church, at the beginning of this holy time, in the words of St. Paul, (*Rom. xiii. 11*, read in the epistle of the first Sunday in advent) to dispose ourselves now for Christ. *Knowing the time*, says the apostle, *that it is now the hour for us to rise from sleep: for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. The night is passed, (or far spent) the day is at hand; let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and put on the armour of light: let us walk decently, as in the day, &c.* O! my soul, let us



consider these words as particularly addressed to us, in order to awaken us, and to stir us up to begin a new life. Alas! have we not hitherto been quite asleep, as to the greatest of all our concerns? Are not far the greatest part of Christians quite asleep, by their unaccountable indolence in the great business of the salvation of their souls, and of a happy eternity? Are they not sleeping too, which is worse, in the very midst of dangers, and of mortal enemies, who are continually plotting their destruction; and even upon the very brink of a precipice, which if they fall down, will let them in a moment into hell? O let us then all hearken seriously to this summons; and rouse ourselves now, whilst we have time, out of this unhappy lethargy: and from this hour begin to apply ourselves in good earnest to that only business for which we came into this world. *O let us cast off now and for ever the works of darkness, and put on Jesus Christ!*

Consider 9dly, that on the first Sunday of advent the terrors also of God's justice are set before our eyes in the description given in the gospel of the great accounting day: to the end that they that will not correspond with the sweet invitations of God's mercy, and awake from sleep at the summons addressed to them in the epistle; may be roused at least by the thunder of his justice, denounced in the gospel: and be induced by the wholesome fear of the dreadful judgments, that are continually hanging over the heads of impenitent sinners, to make good use of this present time of mercy; lest hereafter there should be neither time nor mercy for them. Ah! sinners, *if this day you hear the voice of the Lord*, either sweetly inviting you with the allurements of his mercy, or terrifying you with the threats of his judgments; *see you harden not your hearts.* For now is your time. Sleep on no longer; lest you come to sleep in death: as it happened to them of old, who by refusing to hearken to God's voice, provoked him so far, that *he swore to them in his wrath*

*that they should never enter into his rest.* O remember that the day of the Lord, and his judgments, shall come as a snare upon all them that will not watch, *Luke xxi. 35.*

Conclude to enter now into the true spirit of this holy time, which is a penitential spirit; and to *prepare the way of the Lord*; by putting away all thy sins, and purifying thy soul for him: thus shalt thou welcome him at his coming; and shalt be welcome to him.

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*On what we must do to prepare the Way of the Lord.*

Dec. 2. **C**ONSIDER first, that the church, in the office appointed for this holy time, frequently puts us in mind of the mission and preaching of St. John the Baptist, and of the manner in which he endeavoured to prepare the people for Christ; to the end that we may learn from the doctrine of this great forerunner of our Lord, in what dispositions we ought also to be, if we would duly prepare the way for him. Now what the Baptist continually preached to the people was: That they should turn from their evil ways; and *do penance: because the kingdom of heaven was at hand*: that they should *bring forth fruits worthy of penance*; if they would *escape the wrath to come*; and this without delay: for that *now the axe was laid at the root of the tree; and that every tree that did not bring forth good fruit should be cut up, and cast into the fire.* That they should not flatter themselves with expectations of impunity, or security, because they had Abraham for their father: for that *God was able to raise up from the very stones children to Abraham: and therefore* without a thorough conversion from their sins, they were to expect that the kingdom of God, and the grace and dignity of being children of Abraham (the father of all the faithful) should be taken away from them, and given to the Gentiles. He added, that *he baptized them indeed with water unto penance*: but that another should come after him, that should

*baptize them with the Holy Ghost and with fire: that his fan was in his hand, and that he should thoroughly cleanse his floor, and gather his wheat into the barn: but the chaff he would burn with inextinguishable fire,* Matt. iii. This was the way St. John prepared the people for Christ; and it is by our conforming ourselves in practice to these his lessons, at this holy time, we must also *prepare the way of the Lord*, and be prepared for him.

Consider 3dly, that the great theme of the preaching of St. John, in order to prepare the way of the Lord, was the virtue of *penance*: inasmuch as this was the only means by which sinners could ever effectually be reconciled to God, after actual mortal sin; and therefore, this same was at all times perpetually inculcated, by all that were ever sent with commission from God, to reclaim unhappy souls that had gone astray from him. It is then by this virtue of *penance*, we also are to prepare the way of the Lord, at this holy time: this is the proper devotion for the time of advent. Now this virtue of *penance* (which always was, always is, and always will be, absolutely and indispensably necessary for the bringing back sinners to God) implies three things: first, the renouncing and detesting of all our sins; by which we have offended so good a God: secondly, a turning of ourselves to God, with our whole heart, and a dedicating ourselves henceforward to him, both for time and eternity: and thirdly, an offering of ourselves to him, to make him what satisfaction we can for our past offences, by a penitential life. Christians, this is our great business at this holy time; if we hope to prepare ourselves for Christ, this is the proper exercise for it: to pass over in our mind, in the bitterness of our soul, all our years that have been spent in sin; to bewail and lament, every day of this holy season, all our past treasons against the Divine Majesty; to turn now to God with our whole heart; to offer our whole souls to him; to exercise ourselves in his love; and to an-

ter into new articles with him of an eternal allegiance, with a full determination of rather dying, than being any more disloyal to him; and letting not one day pass without offering him some penitential satisfaction for our past guilt, to be united to, and sanctified by, the passion and death of our Lord Jesus Christ. O how happy are they that employ the time of advent in this manner! O how willingly will our Lord, at the approaching Christmas, communicate himself to such souls as these!

Consider 3dly, that at the approaching solemnity of Christmas, the church, by thrice celebrating the sacred mysteries, in the same day, commemorates three different births of Christ: his *eternal* birth from his Father: his *temporal* birth from his mother; and his *spiritual* birth, by which he is born by grace in our souls. Hence the best devotion, for the time of Christmas, is that which conduces the most to bring Christ into our souls by this *spiritual* birth: and consequently the best devotion for the time of advent, is to cleanse and to purify our souls, that he may find nothing in them that may disqualify them for his visits, or hinder him from coming to be spiritually born in us. For he will never come into an unclean soul, nor be born in a mansion where Satan resides. See then, my soul, what measures thou art to take at this holy time, to prepare thy inward house for the spiritual birth of this king of glory. 1. Thou must cleanse it and purify it from sin and Satan: 2. Thou must adorn it with virtue and piety: and 3. Thou must daily invite thy Lord thither by fervent prayer: thus shalt thou *prepare the way of the Lord* in the manner that is best pleasing to him.

Conclude to put in practice all these lessons to the best of thy power at this holy time: an advent spent in this manner, in devotion and penance, cannot fail of bringing thee a happy Christmas.

*On the Miracles of Christ our Lord.*

Dec. 3. **C**ONSIDER first, that Christ our Lord did not only teach us his heavenly truths by his preaching, by his parables, and by his maxims, laid down in the gospel: but his whole life, and all his actions, were designed to be an instruction to us: and that his miracles in particular were not only wrought to confirm our faith and our hope in him; and to be so many evidences of his goodness and charity to poor mortals: but to give us also great lessons for our practice, if we would take care to look well into them, and to learn the mysterious meaning of them. Especially we must ever remember, that as the diseases and corporal infirmities we are liable to in this life, mystically represent the spiritual maladies of our vices and passions; so we are to learn from the miracles wrought by our Redeemer, in healing all manner of diseases of the body, to apply continually to him for the cure of the like diseases in the soul; which are indeed the far more grievous evils of the two, and if not healed, are attended with far more dreadful consequences. But, alas! how seldom do the children of this world take to heart the seeking the cure of these spiritual diseases; or apply, in a proper manner, to this great physician, for his aid, who, when he was here upon earth, never cast off any that applied to him? So much more are worldlings concerned for the body than for the soul; for time than for eternity. O, my soul, let us at least be more wise.

Consider 2dly, what were the miracles which our Saviour more frequently wrought from the time of his first beginning to preach his Gospel? *He went about all Galilee, says St. Matthew, healing all manner of sickness, and all manner of diseases among the people: and his fame went throughout all Syria, and they brought to him all sick people, &c. and such as were possessed by devils, and lunaticks, and paralyticks, and he healed them, Matt. iv. 23. And there came*

to him great multitudes, having with them the dumb, the blind, the lame, the maimed; and many others: and they cast them down at his feet, and he healed them, Matt. xv. 30. And whithersoever he entered into towns, or into villages or cities, they laid the sick in the streets, and besought him that they might but touch the hem of his garment, and as many as touched him were made whole, Mark vi. 56. And all the multitude sought to touch him, for virtue went out from him and healed all, Luke vi. 19. See, Christians, how ready your Lord was, during his mortal life, to cure all kind of bodily diseases, and how wholesome it was to come near him, or to touch either him or his garments, by reason of the virtue that went out from him to heal all. O assure yourselves he is no less ready, or willing, now to heal your souls: for his power, his mercy, his goodness, his charity and love for you, knows no bounds! It is no ways diminished since he shed his blood for the love of you, and carried it in with him into the sanctuary of heaven, there to present it to his Father in your behalf. Examine then, and see what your diseases are; and run with confidence to him for your cure. You need not go far to seek him: for though he is gone to heaven, he still will be *with you even to the end of the world.* You may find him in the Eucharist; where a virtue continually goes out from him for the healing of all: you may find him at any time, and at any place, in his divine person; especially in his temple, in the centre of your souls; for there is no place in which he either more willingly resides, or more frequently works his wonders, than in the interior of such Christians as duly seek him by a spirit of recollection, and an internal life.

Consider 3dly, that Christ our Lord continually *went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed by the devil,* Acts x. 38. As he came to deliver men from the tyranny and slavery of the devil: so his miracles were most frequently wrought in casting out devils; in destroying the works of the devil;

and in forcing Satan out of his usurped dominions. See, Christians, what occasion your souls may have for this sort of miracles. Are they not spiritually possessed, or obsessed, by this wicked spirit; by the means of some or other of the capital sins: for where any of these are predominant, there Satan reigns? Does not this wicked one render you spiritually deaf and dumb, with regard to the voice of God, and the confession of your sins? Does he not bend you down to the earth by worldly affections; like the crooked woman in the gospel? *Luke xiii. 16.* Does he not make you blind, by obstructing your interior sight, with regard to the light of truth, &c.? In all these cases you must run to Christ our Lord, to be dispossessed, or to be delivered from this mortal enemy of your souls. Christ's hand is not shortened; he will cast out this wicked one, at your humble request: but O take care not to be of the number of those, who, by wholly giving themselves up to their carnal passions, are rather *swine* than Christians: for of such as these, the devil has so great a hold, that he will not easily be cast out. Our Lord himself gave a licence to a whole legion of devils to enter into swine: and whither did they hurry them, but down a precipice, into the deep, where they all perished? Take care this never be your case!

Conclude to consider henceforward, the miracles of our Lord not only as confirmations of the truth of the Christian faith, and evidences of the power, mercy, and goodness of the author of it; and consequently as strong inducements to believe in him, hope in him, and love him above all things: but also to study well the practical lessons which are to be learnt from these miracles; inasmuch as they point out to us the sovereign means of ridding ourselves of all our evils, by having recourse, with a lively faith, and humble prayer, to the great source of all our good.

*On our Lord's cleansing the Lepers.*

Dec. 4. **C**ONSIDER first, that the cleansing the leprosy, is one of those miracles of our Lord which is more particularly instructive; because the leprosy was an emblem or figure of sin. Hence we find so many prescriptions, in the Levitical law, (*Levit. xiii. and xiv.*) with regard to such as had contracted the leprosy; and the judgment that was to be made of them by the priests, to whose inspection they were committed by the law; and the rites and sacrifices by which they were to be cleansed: which were all figurative and expressive of what was to be done by, or for them, who had contracted the spiritual leprosy of sin. The first mentioned to have been cleansed by our Lord of his leprosy, was he that came (after our Saviour's coming down from the mountain, *Matt. viii. 2, 3.*) and worshipped him, saying: *Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. And Jesus put forth his hand, and touched him, saying, I will: be thou made clean. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed.* See, Christians, by this example, in what manner you are to apply to your Lord, if you desire to be cleansed of your spiritual leprosy. See with what a strong and lively faith, accompanied with a profound humility, this leper presents himself before our Saviour: and learn to imitate him. Faith and humility are very efficacious with your heavenly physician. It was appointed, (*Levit. xiii. 44, &c.*) that whosoever was defiled with the leprosy, and separated by the judgment of the priest, should keep a respectful distance with regard to the rest of the faithful; and should, both by his outward habit, and by the cry of his voice, declare aloud, that he was defiled and unclean: to signify the humble dispositions which are necessary in the case of the spiritual leprosy, before we can expect to meet with a cure.

Consider 2dly, how our Lord, having cleansed the leper, to teach us to avoid all ostentation and vain glory, in doing good, said to him: *See thou tell no*



man: but go shew thyself to the priest, and offer the gift, which Moses commanded, for a testimony to them. Our Lord sent those whom he cleansed from the leprosy to the priests, to conform to the prescription of the law of Moses; and at the same time, to give us to understand, that even, when by the grace of a perfect contrition; he cleanses souls from the leprosy of sin, he still expects that they should shew themselves to his priests, by a sincere confession of their sins; in consequence of his divine law, by which he has given to his priests the inspection and judgment of the leprosy of the soul; with the power of *binding and loosing, forgiving and retaining sins*; and the *dispensation of all the mysteries and sacraments*. The person that was cleansed from the leprosy, and sent to the priest, was ordered to offer the gift which Moses commanded, and consequently to observe the other prescriptions of the law, *Levit. xii.* He was, in order to his purification, to be sprinkled seven times with the blood of a bird, immolated over living waters; he was to wash all his cloaths; he was to shave all his hair; and to be washed himself all over with water; and then after seven days, he was to offer a burnt-offering, and a sin-offering; and to be fully cleansed and expiated by the blood of the lamb, offered for sin; and by the oil of the sacrifice, that had been sprinkled seven times before the Lord: to signify to us, by these mysterious ceremonies, that such as desire to be thoroughly cleansed from the spiritual leprosy of sin, must, by repeated washings of their consciences with the waters of compunction; by frequently sprinkling their souls with the blood of the Lamb of God; and by the applying to them the unction of the seven-fold grace of the Holy Ghost, attain to this perfect purification.

Consider 3dly, what we read (*Luke xvii.*) of ten other lepers, who applied to our Lord for their cure: *they stood afar off; and lifted up their voice, saying: Jesus, O master, have mercy on us. And when he saw them, he said: go shew yourselves to the priests.*

*And it came to pass, that as they went, they were cleansed. See, my soul, how quickly thy Lord is moved to shew mercy to them, that with a loud cry, call for mercy: that is, with the loud cry of fervent prayer, joined with a profound humility, and a true sense of their own misery and unworthiness: expressed in the case of these men, by their standing afar off, as not daring to come nearer to our Lord, by reason of their uncleanness. O let us learn to apply to our Saviour, for the cure of our spiritual leprosy, with the like fervour and humility! But then, mark also what follows: And one of them, when he saw that he was cleansed, went back, and with a loud voice glorified God: and he fell on his face before his feet, giving thanks: and this man was a Samaritan. And Jesus answering, said, were there not ten made clean? And where are the nine? There is no one found to return, and to give glory to God, but this stranger. O, Christians, let us learn by this example, the sentiments of love and gratitude, devotion and humility, with which we ought to praise and glorify God, after being cleansed by his mercy from the unhappy leprosy of sin: the great value also we ought to set upon the grace of our purification and reconciliation to his Divine Majesty; and the care we ought to take never more to incur this worst of all uncleanness, and of all evils. Alas! where these sentiments are wanting in penitents, it is much to be apprehended, that they are not far off from relapsing again into their former leprosy, and that in a worse degree than before.*

Conclude to dread, and to fly from the spiritual leprosy of sin, more than from any other evil: but if at any time you have reason to apprehend that you have incurred this dreadful uncleanness; learn, from the foregoing considerations, to whom, and in what manner, you are to apply for your cure; and how you are to behave, after having found this mercy.

*On our Lord's stilling the Storm at Sea, and feeding the Multitudes.*

Dec. 5. **C**ONSIDER first, the lessons we are to learn from the miracle of Christ's stilling the storm at sea, by his word, *Matt. viii. 23, &c. He entered into a ship, and his disciples followed him: and behold a great storm arose at sea, so that the ship was covered with the waves: but he was asleep. And his disciples came to him, and awaked him, saying: Lord save us: we are perishing. And Jesus saith to them: why are you fearful, O ye of little faith? Then rising up, he commanded the winds and the sea, and there came a great calm.* Christians, we are all embarked, as it were in a ship, during our mortal life, in order to sail towards the haven of a blessed eternity. And for our comfort, we have on board with us, not only the disciples of Christ, that is, the pastors of the church, the successors of the apostles, but also our Lord himself, according to his promise, *Matt. xxviii. 20. Lo I am with you all days, even till the end of the world.* In this voyage, we are often exposed to storms, which threaten sometimes the whole church; as in cases of grievous persecutions, heresies, or other more general evils: at other times endanger particulars, as in cases of temptations and tribulations; from which, more or less, no one can expect to be exempted, in the midst of the winds and waves of the boisterous ocean of this world. But we have Christ on board with us; and therefore we have nothing to fear, if we will but have proper recourse to him, with a lively faith and confidence in him. And though he oftentimes seems to sleep, and defers his aid for a trial of our faith, and to make us more sensible of the necessity we have of him, and more earnest in praying to him; he will not fail, in his good time (if we continue, like the disciples, calling out to him, *Lord save us, we are perishing*) to rise up, and to command the winds and the sea, and restore a calm.

Consider 2dly, the lessons we are also to learn from the miracles of our Saviour's feeding, at one time, five thousand men with five loaves; and at another time, four thousand with seven loaves. Our Lord himself has taught us, upon occasion of the former of these miracles, (*John vi. 26, 27.*) that we are not to seek, or to follow him, for the sake of *the loaves*, that is, for procuring a corporal livelihood, or any temporal advantage; for this would be but catching at the shadow, and losing the substance: that *we are not to labour for the meat that perisheth: but for that, saith he, which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man will give you.* So that the great lesson he would have us to learn from his feeding the multitudes, is, that we should have recourse to him for the food and nourishment of our souls, unto everlasting life; for that he himself is the living, and life-giving bread, which, without any consumption or diminution, *he distributes* to all those that come to him, seeking from him the refreshment of their souls: either by communicating himself to them really in the holy sacrament, or spiritually, by a communion of faith and love.

Consider 3dly, in these miracles of our Lord's feeding the multitudes, what other lessons may be learnt from the circumstances in which he wrought these wonders. *I have compassion, said he, on the multitude; for behold, they have now been with me three days, and have nothing to eat: and if I send them away fasting to their own houses, they will faint in the way, for some of them came from afar off,* Mark viii. 2, 3. The people, whom he favoured with these miracles, had followed him into the desert; they had preferred the attending upon him, and the hearing of his divine word, before all other occupations or recreations: they had continued with him for three whole days, without taking any thought for their bodily nourishment: and therefore our Lord, after feeding their souls with the word of life, and healing all that stood in need of cure, was pleased

to provide also for their corporal sustenance; according to what he promised, (*Matt. vi. 33.*) *Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his justice, and all these things (that is, meat, drink, and cloaths,) shall be added unto you.* Learn from hence, Christians, what wonders your Saviour is disposed to work in favour of those that follow him into the wilderness, by a spiritual retreat; that is, by retiring from the noise and hurry of the world, to attend upon him; that are not quickly wearied with his company, but continue diligently with him (notwithstanding the difficulties and oppositions they meet with from the world, the flesh, and the devil) and that gladly hearken to his divine word. O such as these will not fail of being refreshed by him.

Conclude to follow Christ into the wilderness, by making at least a little wilderness for him in thy own soul, and there frequently attending upon him by recollection and mental prayer: and assure thyself that he will never send thee way fasting, but will have compassion on thee, and frequently feed thee with his hidden manna, lest thou faint in the way; for thou hast as yet a great way to go, before thou canst reach thy eternal home.

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*On the Lessons that are to be learnt from other Miracles of our Lord.*

Dec. 6. **C**ONSIDER first, that the miracles of our Lord were generally wrought in favour of such as applied to him with a lively faith and profound humility; or by the means of earnest prayer: to teach us the great efficacy of faith, of humility, and of fervent prayer; and to encourage us to seek the cure of our souls with the like dispositions. Thus the woman, that had laboured for twelve years under the issue of blood, humbly coming behind our Lord in the crowd, and touching the hem of his garment, was instantly healed, in reward of her faith; as our Lord himself assured her, *Luke viii. 48.* Thus the centurion, by his faith and hu-

mility, obtained of our Lord the immediate cure of his servant, by these words : *Lord, I am not worthy thou shouldst enter under my roof : speak only the word, and my servant shall be healed,* Matt. viii. 8. Thus the woman of Canaan, by her pious importunity, accompanied with the like faith, and humility, obtained the cure of her daughter, *Matt. xv. 28.* And so in many other cases. Whilst at other times, those that have only presented themselves before our Saviour, without presuming either to touch him, or his garments, or even so much as to speak to him ; by the silent eloquence of their humility, have obtained their cure ; as in the case of the man that had the dropsy, *Luke xiv.* O let us learn this kind of eloquence !

Consider 2dly, the particular lessons we may learn, from the miraculous cure of the paralytic, (*Matt. ix.* and *Luke v.*) Our Lord was teaching in a house, surrounded with a great crowd of people, so that there was no coming in through the door : when behold men brought in a bed a man that had the palsy, desiring to present him before him ; but not finding by what way they might bring him in, because of the multitude, they went up upon the roof of the house, which was flat ; and uncovering it, let him down through the tiles with his bed, by ropes, into the midst before Jesus. See here what pains were taken by these men to come at the heavenly physician, from whom they expected the cure of their friend. Who would have thought of going up to the roof of another person's house, and uncovering it, and letting down a sick man in a bed, over the heads of a crowd ? Nothing but a strong faith on the one hand, and an earnest desire of a cure on the other, could ever have suggested such an extraordinary proceeding, which loudly condemns the indolence or indifference of so many Christians now-a-days, whollying ill of a spiritual palsy, which disables them in all their limbs, and threatens them with the approach of an everlasting death, suffer themselves to be kept off from

Christ by every trifling obstacle, or apprehension of difficulty. O Christians, where is your faith? where is your concern for eternity? Why will you not be much more solicitous about the health and welfare of your immortal souls, than about these worldly toys, or these carcasses of yours, that must quickly be the food of worms?

Consider 3dly, how our Lord, upon this occasion, was pleased to begin the cure of the sick man, by first healing his soul from sin: *Son, said he, thy sins are forgiven thee:* to give us to understand, that our corporal maladies are oftentimes sent in punishment of our sins, and that the first thing we have to do, when visited by sickness, is to apply for the remission of our sins, by repentance and confession: and then we may expect, that the scourge may be removed, when the cause is removed. The Scribes and Pharisees took occasion from those words of our Saviour, to charge him with blasphemy in their minds: but he that knew their secret thoughts publicly confuted them, by working so great and evident a miracle, in proof of his power of forgiving sins, as to restore, upon the spot, both health and strength to the man sick of the palsy, with those only words: *Arise, take up thy bed, and go into thy house:* upon which the paralytic immediately rising up before them, took up the bed on which he lay, and went away to his own house, glorifying God. See here, my soul, that thou hast a physician, in the person of thy Redeemer, who is both able and willing to heal all thy infirmities: but see also, that he expects of all such as apply to him for their cure, that they should lie no longer in their beds, by continuing on in the habits or immediate occasions of their sins; but that they should arise without delay, and take up their beds, by bearing with courage the labours and conflicts of a penitential life; and should make the best of their way, by the exercises of solid virtue, to their true home; glorifying, all the way they go, both by their words and their lives, their great Deliverer.

Conclude to spare no pains to come to Christ, in order to be healed by him of all thy spiritual diseases: but remember to carry along with thee a lively faith and a profound humility: these will not fail of introducing thee to him, and obtaining of him all thou desirest.

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*On our Lord's giving Sight to the Blind; and raising the Dead to Life.*

Dec. 7. **C**ONSIDER first, that our Lord, during his mortal life, often restored the sight of the light of this world, to them that were corporally blind; but oftener by far, both then and ever since, has by his great mercy opened the eyes of them that were spiritually blind, to see the light of God, and his eternal truths. He gave sight to him that was *born blind*, (John ix.) by spreading clay upon his eyes, and ordering him to wash in the pool of *Siloe* (which is interpreted *sent*); to instruct us that we, who according to the soul, are all born blind, by original sin; must have our eyes opened to the light of truth, by the application of this mystical clay of self-knowledge to our inward eyes; and by being washed in him, who was *sent* from God, to be the *true light of the world*. In the supplication we make to him, for the obtaining the sight of this divine light, we must, like the blind men of Jericho, shew ourselves quite in earnest, by the fervour and importunity of our prayer; and not be discouraged by the opposition we meet with from the crowd of distractions, &c. that rebukes us, as it were, and seeks to stop our mouths; but cry out so much the more for mercy, even as they did, (*Matt. xx. 31.*) and our Lord will not fail to shew us the mercy we call for, and to enlighten the eyes of our souls.

Consider 2dly, that in the gospel we read of three, whom our Saviour raised from death to life: one was the daughter of Jairus, the ruler of the synagogue, a girl of twelve years old; another was a young man, the son of a widow of the city of Naim; the third



was Lazarus of Bethania, the brother of Martha and Mary. The first was but just then dead, and was raised to life by our Lord with these two words : *Talitha cumi* ; that is, *girl arise*. The second was carried out in order to be buried ; and for the raising of him to life, something more was done : for our Lord came near, and touched the bier, and stopped them that carried it, and then said to the deceased, *young man, I say to thee arise ; and he that was dead sat up and began to speak, &c.* But Lazarus had been dead and buried four days ; and before our Lord restored him to life, we read, (*John xi.*) that *he groaned in spirit, and troubled himself*, (ver. 33.) that he went to the sepulchre, and *wept*, (ver. 34, 35.) that he *groaned again in himself*, and ordered the stone to be taken away, (ver. 38, 39.) that he *lifted up his eyes to heaven*, and prayed to his Father ; and then *cried with a loud voice, Lazarus come forth*, (ver. 41, 42, 43.) The first of these represents such souls as have but just now fallen into sin ; who by a timely and fervent application to our Lord, who alone can raise the dead to life, may more easily be recovered out of the jaws of death and hell, and brought back to the life of grace. The second represents such souls as are not only fallen into the death of sin, but are already laid upon the bier, and carried towards the sepulchre of a sinful habit, by repeated acts of sin. For the raising of these to life, stronger graces are required ; signified by our Lord's touching the bier, and causing the bearers of it, that is, the criminal passions, which are hurrying the poor sinner to his grave, to stop and stand still. But Lazarus represents the more dismal condition of such as are already buried, in inveterate habits of mortal sin : whose case requires still more extraordinary graces, signified by the tears, groans, and the loud cry of the Son of God. O ! Christians, let us dread the death of sin above all other evils ; but much more the being buried in the grave of sinful habits ; from which we shall not be raised again, without a greater

miracle, than even that by which Lazarus was called out of his monument. And who shall dare to be so presumptuous as to go on in his sins, flattering himself with the expectation of such a miracle being wrought in his favour?

Consider 3dly, that in these miracles wrought by our Lord, in raising the dead to life, we find he was pleased to let himself be moved by the tears of the living, as in the case of the widow's son, and of Lazarus: to encourage us to present to him our prayers and tears for poor sinners, dead and buried in sin; with an humble confidence, that in his great mercy he will have pity on them, (who, alas! have no pity on themselves,) and restore them to life. O what a happiness will it be for a Christian, to be instrumental in this manner, in bringing back any one from death to life! how agreeable will such prayers and tears be to our good Lord, which deliver a soul from sin and hell: and how beneficial to ourselves, in covering a multitude of our sins! But mark well the care our Lord took for the future well being of those whom he raised to life. He ordered that *they should give to eat* to the daughter of Jairus, as soon as her soul was returned into her body, (*Luke viii. 55.*): to signify, that the sovereign means to keep her soul in life, and to recover her strength and health, is a frequent and worthy participation of the blessed sacrament. He had no sooner given life to the widow's son, in consideration of her tears, but he *delivered him to his mother*, (*Luke vii. 15.*) to signify the special care he expects from the church, the common mother of all the faithful, of all those her children, whom by his grace he brings back from the death of sin, at the intercession of her prayers and tears. And with regard to Lazarus, whom he called out of his monument, *bound feet and hands with winding bands, &c.* he immediately ordered that they should *loose him, and let him go*, (*John xi. 44.*): to signify the necessity of discharging the bands of the affections and occasions of sin; in order to maintain in a new

life, such as were buried a little while before in bad habits; and to the end they may be qualified henceforward to go, that is, to begin, and to continue their great journey, they are to make, to the mountain of eternity.

Conclude, from the consideration of these miracles of our Saviour, to have recourse to him, on all occasions, with an humble confidence in his mercy and goodness, for obtaining of light, life, and all other good, both for thyself and thy neighbours. Thou canst not do him a greater pleasure, nor thyself a greater service.

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*On the Conception of the Blessed Virgin.*

Dec. 8. **C**ONSIDER first, how man, who was originally created in justice and sanctity; to be happy here in grace and innocence, and eternally happy hereafter in the enjoyment of his Creator; having wretchedly fallen from God by sin, and forfeited his original justice, with all the advantages annexed to it; and incurred at the same time all kind of miseries, both for time and eternity, out of which it was not in his power to extricate himself by any thing that he could do of himself; the infinite goodness of God, out of pure pity and compassion, was pleased to decree that his own eternal Son should come down from heaven, to be our Saviour; to redeem us from all our sins with his most precious blood; to bring along with him mercy, grace, and salvation to us, and by his death to open to us the gates of everlasting life. O Christians, it is this infinite goodness of our God that we must never forget. It calls aloud for all the return we are able to make, of love and gratitude, of adoration, praise, and glory; and of a total dedication of our whole being to the service of our great deliverer, for all our time, and for all eternity. O may all heaven and earth, with all the angels and saints, bless and glorify his name for endless ages, for all these wonders of his mercy, bounty and love for us.

Consider 2dly, that God having thus decreed to give us his only Son for our Saviour, was pleased to reveal this great mystery, from the very beginning to our first parents; and afterwards, from time to time, to the patriarchs and prophets, and others his servants: to the end that this might be in all ages the capital object of the faith of all true believers; and that as none could ever attain to eternal salvation, but through the merits of the Son of God made man for us, so all might approach to God for mercy and grace, through faith in him. In the mean time, the Divine Wisdom, which had created the world in six days, was pleased to employ full four thousand years in preparing the world for this great Redeemer. All the most remarkable passages of sacred history, recorded in holy writ, have all some relation to him, or his church: all the most eminent servants of God, and deliverers of his people, were so many figures and forerunners of him: the whole law, with all its sacrifices and ceremonies, alluded to him, and to the great sacrifice he was to offer: the writings of the prophets, and of the psalms, are full of him. Now when the time of his coming drew near, God, who had done great things, long before, for the whole people of the Hebrews in general, and for that family in particular, of which he would have his Son to be born into the world, was pleased to do still greater things in favour of her, whom he had chosen, in his eternal decrees, to bring forth this Lord of Glory and Saviour of the world. These great things wrought for her, even in her very conception, we celebrate in the festival of this day: to glorify him that wrought them; and to honour her, for whom they were wrought. Our Lord, in taking her for his mother, and us for his brethren, has authorized us to consider her as our mother also; to have recourse to her as such; and to rejoice in all her advantages. We cannot love the Son of God, and be indifferent in what relates to the honour of his mother,

Consider 3dly, that the Son of God, making choice

of this blessed Virgin to be his mother, was pleased to prepare her for this near alliance with him, by that extraordinary grace, of keeping her ever *pure* from sin; either original or actual, mortal or venial: for so it was becoming, that she who was to bear in her womb, and to bring forth to the world, *purity* itself, should never be defiled with any spot or stain of sin. Learn from hence, Christian souls, the care you ought to take, to keep yourselves *pure*, if you hope to be agreeable to the eyes of this same Lord. Learn to *purify* yourselves, from all sin, as often as you approach to him, to receive him in the sacred mysteries. And as the particular devotion of this holy time of Advent should be, to prepare yourselves in such manner for worthily celebrating the birth of Christ, as that you may also be partakers in this great mystery, by his coming to you, and being spiritually born in you: see you make it your business now to dispose yourselves for so great a happiness, by purifying yourselves from *all defilement, either of the flesh, or of the spirit*; and thus prepare a proper place within you, for the Lord of Glory to be born in.

Conclude to honour the immaculate conception of the Blessed Virgin, by a perpetual love of purity, in all its branches; and an imitation of her purity, as far as thy frailty and corruption will admit of: thus mayest thou hope that the fountain of all purity will come also to thee, and be spiritually born in thee.

*On the Purity with which we are to prepare our souls for Christ.*

Dec. 9. **C**ONSIDER first, that he who prepared the Blessed Virgin to be the mother of his Son, by this early care to keep her pure in her very conception, would thereby give us to understand what dispositions he expects in us, in order to our being also qualified for the spiritual conception and birth of the same Lord in our souls. For as we could never have been happy, if the Son of God had not been born into this world for us: so we never can be

happy, if he be not also spiritually conceived and born in us. No, my soul, we must put off the old man, and put on the new, which is Jesus Christ, before we can come to God: and this putting on the new man must be effected by his being spiritually conceived in our souls. Now he can never come to any soul, to be spiritually conceived or born there, if that soul be not clean: for though he humbled himself so far as to be born in a poor stable, yet he will not be born in an unclean soul; because such a soul is the habitation of unclean spirits, and therefore cannot be a proper place for his spiritual birth. It is then by cleanness of conscience and purity, we must *prepare the way of the Lord*, if we hope to have a share in the happiness he offers us, by his incarnation and birth: without this, his coming will be to our condemnation.

Consider 2dly, that this cleanness and purity, which is indispensably necessary for the spiritual conception and birth of Christ in our souls, must be, at least, from all wilful and deadly sin. For wherever wilful and deadly sin resides, there is the seat of Satan; there he resides and reigns: and consequently there can be no room for the birth of Christ in such a soul. So that the first and most essential branch of Christian purity, without which *God has no part in us*, (Job xxxi. 2.) and we have no part in him, is a purity of conscience, at least from mortal sin; joined with a fixed determination of the soul, for no consideration whatsoever, for no honour, interest, or pleasure; for no fear, or love, or human respect; for no promises or allurements on the one hand, or terrors and threats on the other; in fine, for nothing that the world can either give or take away, ever to consent, so much as in thought, to any such sin. Christians, what are your dispositions in this regard? Are your consciences either pure from all deadly sin by innocence, or cleansed by penitence? Are your souls in a proper condition to welcome Christ? Are you in a settled resolution to give

up the dominion of your souls to this great King, who desires to be born there, and to live there? Are you willing to sacrifice to his will and pleasure all other loves that offer to oppose his reign, so as to be ready to part even with life itself, rather than with your allegiance to him? This is the purity of conscience he absolutely insists upon, and nothing less will satisfy him. If you are not in this disposition, you are none of his, and he will not be born in you.

Consider 3dly, that to welcome Christ in a suitable manner, you must not content yourselves with having your consciences only cleared from all mortal sin, or your souls only settled in a resolution of never more being guilty, upon any consideration, of such sins as may eternally separate you from your God, and cast you into hell. This is but a low degree of Christian purity; and those that aim no higher, are in great danger of not even arriving so far. To make light of smaller sins; to be indifferent about Christian perfection; to pretend to no more than the avoiding hell; to indulge one's self in a negligent lukewarm way of living, and in a variety of evil habits, and known sins, which one is willing to suppose are only venial, with little or no concern about the offence we commit against God, or any serious thought of amendment; so far from being a proper disposition to prepare the soul for the spiritual birth of Christ, is indeed the broad road to mortal sin, and too often ends in hell. A generous Christian, and one that is a true lover of his God, does not stand to enquire whether the doing this, or that, will send his soul to hell, or no: it is enough to determine him to avoid it with all his power, to know that it offends his God, whom he loves with his whole heart: and therefore he dreads more the doing any thing that is displeasing in his eyes, than either death, or hell itself. My soul, are these thy dispositions?

Conclude to make it thy business, now at least, to labour for this perfect purity of conscience, not only from all deadly sin, but also from all known deliberate

venial sins: and much more from indulging thyself in the habit of any such sin. For how canst thou expect that infinite purity should be willing to take up his abode in thy soul, if thou art not careful to keep it clean, at least from all wilful and affected stains?

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*On purifying the interior Powers of the Soul.*

Dec. 10. **C**ONSIDER first, that as this spiritual conception and birth of Christ is to be perfected in our own interior; so in order to dispose ourselves effectually for so great a happiness, and that it may continue with us unto life everlasting; by our abiding always in Christ, and Christ's abiding always in us; we must be ever jealous of the purity of the interior powers of the soul. *All the glory of the king's daughter* (the Christian soul) *is within*: (Ps. xlv.) there, is to be the residence of the Lord of glory: the beauty of the interior is to attract him thither: and this beauty depends upon keeping these inward powers of the soul in a proper state of purity. See then, Christians, if you desire to have Christ with you, that you take proper care.

1. To purify your *understanding*, from all its errors, false opinions, and affected ignorances; by obliging it to open its eyes to the light of divine truths, in the exercise of meditation and mental prayer.
2. To purify your *memory*, from all its impertinent amusements, distractions, and evagations; by accustoming it to the remembrance of God, and a recollection of thought.
3. To purify your *will*, from all its disorderly affections; by fixing your heart upon solid and eternal goods, but especially upon your sovereign good, which is God himself. Thus shall your whole souls be agreeable to him.

Consider 2dly, that one of the greatest enemies to this interior purity, (which is so necessary to bring Christ into our souls, and to fix him there) is that unhappy dissipation of mind, in which many Christians pass their days; always thinking, but very sel-



dom thinking on any thing to the purpose. Alas ! it is too true, that the minds of the generality of men are a constant thoroughfare of vain amusements, of empty, idle, impertinent thoughts, succeeding one another all the day long, and leaving little or no room for God, or the things of God and the soul, to come in, or to make any lasting impression. Thus the inward castle is left quite unguarded ; and the enemy has free access to come and rifle, and even murder the soul at pleasure, by suggesting a variety of criminal thoughts, which are admitted without resistance, through the supine carelessness and licentiousness of the mind : whilst on the other hand, the divine grace is shut out from such souls ; by their whole attention being engaged by these toys and trifles : so that when God would come, and would visit them, they are not at home for him ; but are gone gadding abroad after other impertinences. See, my soul, if this be not thy case. And if it be, seek a remedy without delay, or there will be no room for Christ in thee. Now the only remedy is a recollection of spirit, and an attention to God in all thy ordinary actions and employments.

Consider 3dly, that if it be so necessary, in order to conceive, and to bring forth Christ in thy interior : to maintain the *purity of thy mind*, by recollection of thought, it must be no less necessary to maintain also the *purity of thy heart*, by banishing from thence all disorderly affections : for these are no less apt to disqualify the soul for this spiritual conception and birth of Christ in her ; they are no less unclean and disagreeable in his eyes ; and no less opposite to his reign. Neither can the *purity* of the mind and of the thought be maintained without the *purity* of the affection and of the heart : for the mind and the thought are generally bent upon such objects as the heart affects : we think most upon what we love most ; and therefore if the affections of our heart are *impure*, our thoughts will also be *impure* : for where our treasure is, there both our hearts and

our thoughts will be. Now that love alone is *pure* which makes God its *treasure*: and all such affections are *impure* as take off the heart from God, and make it seek its *treasure* in something that is not God: or which at least divides the heart between God and the creature. And these are the disorderly affections that must be banished, in order to dispose the soul for Christ.

Conclude to examine well, and to set thy interior in order, particularly with regard to these two branches of purity: *viz.* the purity of the mind, and the purity of the heart. For Christ will not come to be spiritually born in any soul, or to make his abode in any soul where he is not allowed to be sole master, both of the mind and of the heart. Therefore the mind must be set free from the servitude of useless thoughts and impertinent amusements; and the heart from the servitude of misplaced affections, and every fond, sensual, worldly or distracting love, to make place for the birth of Christ, and his reign in the soul. The soul that desires to have Christ with her, must endeavour to be like the spouse in the canticles, *a garden enclosed, a fountain sealed up.* Dissipation of thought, and all disorderly affections, bring such company into the soul, as the Son of God will not endure.

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*On the Purity of our Actions.*

Dec. 11. **C**ONSIDER first, that this Christian purity, which is to prepare the way for Christ in us, and to dispose us to give him a proper entertainment, must not be confined to the interior powers of the soul; but ought to extend itself also to the whole body of our actions. As the tree ought to be pure, so ought the fruits also: for the tree is known by its fruits. Now our fruits are our actions; so that these must be pure, or else we shall not be pure; nor duly qualified for that happy union with Christ, which we are to aspire to, at this approaching solemnity: for that which is impure can-

not be in a proper condition to be united with the sovereign purity. Now for our actions to be *pure*, it is not enough that what we do be good in itself; it must also be good in all its circumstances: for any one vicious circumstance is enough to corrupt the whole. But that on which the *purity of our actions* principally depends, is the *purity of our intention*: according to that of the Gospel, *Matt. vi. 22, 23. If thy eye be single, thy whole body shall be light-some: but if thy eye be evil, thy whole body shall be darksome.* For the eye of the soul is the intention: which is then single, when the view of the soul is carried towards God in all that she does; but when the intention is turned off from God, and looks at something else, the eye is *evil*, and the work is *darksome*.

Consider 2dly, that all Christian virtue depends upon this purity of intention: the meanest of our actions are ennobled by it: and the highest, and the most esteemed by men, are good for nothing in the sight of God without it. Now the perfection of this purity of intention is to act in all things from the motive of the love of God; for the greater glory of God; and in conformity to the will of God. This carries the soul up to God, and brings down God to the soul: this produces a happy union of the soul with her God. Christians, see here the shortest way to all good, and the sovereign means of arriving at the height of perfection. The practice of this requires: 1. That you should begin all your days, and all your works, with God; by offering them all up to him, and to his service. 2. That you should consult his divine will in all things, and make it the rule of all you do. 3. That you should watch over yourselves, both in the beginning, and in the progress of every work you take in hand, that you may exclude all byemotives, suggested by your self-love, human respects, interest, pleasure, or passion. 4. That you should often renew the directing of your intention to God: and should endeavour to season all your ordinary ac-

tions and employments, with frequent aspirations or breathings of the soul towards him.

Consider 3dly, that the two capital enemies of purity of intention, and which spiritual persons in particular have most occasion to guard against, are *vain-glory* and *pride*. The difference between the two is, that *vain-glory* consists in loving, and desiring to be esteemed by others; whereas *pride* consists in a vain esteem of one's self: *vain-glory* makes persons ever turn their eye upon what others shall say or think of their words or actions; it makes them perfect idolaters of the point of honour, of the esteem, reputation, and approbation of the world: but *pride* makes them full of themselves; measuring, as it were, themselves on every occasion, and their performances, with those of others, and still giving themselves the preference before others; ever turning their eye upon their own excellence; building on their own lights, resolutions, strength, or capacity; and taking a secret complacency in themselves in all the good they do. Both the one and the other are infinitely pernicious to the soul, by turning off her eye from God; and consequently robbing her of all the fruit of her good works, and making them all rotten at heart, and good for nothing in the sight of God: they even pervert the best of her performances, to her eternal condemnation, by shutting out God from them, and giving the preference to these devils of pride and vain glory before him. As long as these have possession of the soul, there will be nothing but corruption there, and no room for the spiritual birth of Christ.

Conclude to aim, at all times, at a purity in all thy actions; by purifying thy intention from all pride and *vain-glory*; and from every other thing that may turn off thy eye from God. Let God be the beginning and end of all thou dost: and take care to **give to every action its full perfection; by doing all for God's greater glory, and out of the pure motive of his divine love: and the very meanest of thy daily**

actions will suffice to make thee a Saint. Whereas neither long prayers, nor large alms, nor converting millions of souls, nor working of miracles, nor giving thy body to the flames, will avail thee any thing, if thy intention be vitiated with pride or vain-glory.

*On the angelical Salutation.*

Dec. 12. **C**ONSIDER first, that after the Blessed Virgin had been prepared, by the purity of her conception, and by the purity of her life; by the purity of her soul, and of her body; of her heart, and of her mind; and of all her actions and intentions; to conceive in her sacred womb the Son of God, whom she had long before conceived in her soul: the time appointed by our Lord being now come, the Archangel Gabriel was sent to her from heaven, upon the most solemn embassy that ever was: *viz.* to treat with this most humble maid concerning the great work of the incarnation of the eternal Word; by his taking flesh of her: in order to the redemption of mankind from Satan, sin, and hell; and reconciliation with God: and in order to the establishment of a new law, a new and everlasting covenant; a kingdom of heaven upon earth, by grace, in favour of all that should embrace this grace; and an eternal kingdom for them hereafter in glory. But give ear now, my soul, to the angel's address, and mark every word of it. *The Angel being come in, said to her: Hail full of grace, the Lord is with thee, blessed art thou amongst women,* Luke i. 28. He greeted her with the word *Ave* or *hail*: a word of salutation and congratulation with her for all that God had done, and was about to do in her favour, and for his choosing her to be the happy instrument that should give birth to the source of all our good. O let heaven and earth join in this *Ave* of salutation and congratulation! As all heaven and earth are highly interested in the issue of this most sacred negotiation, which is to bring us innumerable benefits,

both for time and eternity, by the incarnation of the Son of God! And see, my soul, thou never forget to testify thy grateful sense of the share designed for thee in these graces and benedictions, by daily joining, with suitable devotion, in this holy salutation and congratulation, as often as thou repeatest the *Ave Maria*.

Consider 2dly, how the Angel, in his salutation, styles the Blessed Virgin *full of grace*; to signify the supereminent degree of divine grace to which God elevated her soul to prepare her to be the mother of his Son. For she was *full* of all that habitual *grace* which justifies and sanctifies the soul: *full* of faith and hope: *full* of divine charity, in both its branches; ever loving God with her whole heart, with her whole soul, with all her mind, and with all her strength, and loving her neighbour as herself: she was *full* of humility, meekness, patience, obedience, and all other moral virtues: she was *full* of wisdom, godliness, the fear of the Lord, and all other gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit: her memory was *full* of holy thoughts; her understanding with the lights of God and divine truths; and her will with most fervent acts and affections of love, zeal, desire of the glory of God, of the coming of the Messiah, and of the redemption of the world. She was *full of grace* in all her thoughts, words, and works: her *works* were all *full*, by the purity of intention, the fervour and love with which she performed them all. Many Saints have been *full of grace*; but none like this queen and mother of all the Saints: whose grace was proportioned to the great designs that God had upon her, and to the supereminent degree to which she was chosen, of being Mother of God. O congratulate, my soul, with the blessed Virgin, for this her *fulness of grace*, which went on continually increasing for the whole time of her life, by the good use she continually made of all God's gifts: and beg, through her intercession,

thou mayest, like her, faithfully correspond, and diligently co-operate with every divine grace.

Consider Sdly, how the Angel adds in his salutation, *the Lord is with thee*: to signify the source from which all her fulness of grace flowed; and the extraordinary manner of God's communicating himself, and all his graces, to this most highly-favoured of all his creatures. For our Lord was not only with the Blessed Virgin, by his essence, his presence, and his power, as he is with all men; nor only by his sanctifying grace, as he is with all the just: but in a most extraordinary manner, by a far more eminent grace, a closer union, and an higher satisfaction. And therefore the Angel adds, *blessed art thou amongst women*; to express the supereminence of those graces and *benedictions* with which she was *blessed* from heaven, and should still be *blessed* more and more; as well as the innumerable *blessings* that should be communicated to all mankind through the fruit of her womb; and the *blessings* and praise that should on that account be given her by all generations. For as one woman by disobedience, in hearkening to the suggestions of the infernal serpent, was the beginning of all the maledictions that fell upon all mankind; so one woman by her humble obedience to the proposals brought her by an angel from heaven, was the beginning of all the benedictions that were to come upon all mankind from the blessed fruit of her womb: by whom also she crushed the serpent's head: who first brought sin and death amongst us. O! see, my soul, with what sentiments of devotion thou oughtest to join with the Angel, and with the blessed St. Elizabeth, and with the whole church of God, in this solemn address to thy Virgin Lady: *Blessed art thou amongst women: and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Luke i. 24.*

Conclude ever to keep up in thy soul a grateful remembrance of all the great things that God has done for the Blessed Virgin, and for us all, in the

incarnation of his Son, by a frequent and devout repetition of the Angelical salutation : always concluding it with that pious address of the church : *Holy Mary, mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death.* Amen. O how just it is, that we should particularly crave the assistance of her prayers, for that critical time when we can do the least for ourselves, and when our all is at stake for eternity.

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*On the Wonders of God in the Incarnation of his Son:*

Dec. 13. **C**ONSIDER first, how, after the Blessed Virgin's consent, and offering herself, with a profound humility, with an entire obedience, and a perfect conformity, to the sacred will of God ; by those words : *Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done to me according to thy word :* (Luke i. 38.) the greatest of all the wonders of God, and of all his works, was immediately effected ; even a Man-God, the miracle of miracles. For a human body, perfect in all its parts, was formed in an instant by the Holy Ghost, out of the purest blood of the Blessed Virgin ; and a most excellent rational soul was at the same time created ; and this body and soul were joined with, and assumed by the eternal Word, the second person of the most adorable Trinity. Thus God was made man : and the Blessed Virgin was made mother of God. Thus in her womb was celebrated that sacred wedding of our human nature with the divine person of the Son of God : to the feast of which we are all invited, *Matt. xxii.* Thus was our humanity exalted to the very highest elevation, by being united with, and subsisting by the person of the eternal Word, and we all, in consequence of this elevation of our human nature, have also been wonderfully dignified and exalted, by being raised up to a kindred with the most high God ; who, by taking to himself our nature, has made us all his brothers and sisters ; and by assuming our humanity,



has made us, in some measure, partakers of his divinity. O my soul, stand thou astonished at these wonders; which will be a subject of the greatest astonishment, both to men and angels, for all eternity! O admire and adore, praise and love, with all thy power, and with all thy affections, that infinite goodness that has wrought all these wonders out of love to thee!

Consider 2dly, the wonders of God in all those graces and excellencies which he conferred on the soul of Christ, and on his sacred humanity, in the first instant of his conception: in consequence of its being united with the divine person. Graces and excellencies which are all immense and incomprehensible: and which exceed, without any comparison, all the rest of the wondrous works of God, and all whatsoever he has done at any time in favour of any of his Saints, or of all of them put together. For God did *not give* to this his Son, his Spirit by measure, (John iii. 34.) as to the rest of his Saints; but *gave all things into his hands: and of his fulness we all receive*, (John i. 16.) even all grace and truth; according to the measure of his giving it to us, Eph. iv. 7. Now these graces and excellencies we may reduce under the following heads. 1. An immense purity from all manner of sin or imperfection whatsoever; not as by privilege, but in his own right, as being *the Lamb of God, who came to take away the sins of the world*. 2. The grace of sanctity, incomparably exceeding that of all the angels and saints put together, from whence he is called the Holy of holies, (Dan. ix.) that is, the Saint of Saints: the Spirit of God resting on him with all his gifts, with an incomprehensible plenitude, Isai. xi. 2. 3. The grace of the *beatific vision* of the divine essence, and that in the most consummate degree; with proportionable love of the Deity, and joy in God. 4. All the *treasures* of the wisdom and knowledge of God. 5. The *power of working all kind of miracles*, and of raising the dead to life, by his own will; with a ge-

neral command over all the elements, and over all nature. 6. The *power of excellency in forgiving sins*, converting sinners, changing their hearts, ordaining sacraments and sacrifices, and distributing amongst men graces, and supernatural gifts. 7. The grace of being the perpetual *head of all the church*, both of heaven and earth; and the source of all blessings, gifts, and graces, that either have been, are at present, or shall at any time be bestowed, upon this *mystical body*, or any of its members. O what subject have we here, my soul, to bless and praise the eternal Father for all these excellent gifts and graces, with which he has enriched his Son, the man Christ Jesus! How ought we also to rejoice and congratulate with the sacred humanity of our Saviour on this occasion: and to give thanks, without ceasing, for all that share or portion of divine grace, which from this overflowing fountain is continually derived on us!

Consider 3dly, in all these graces and excellencies, conferred on the humanity of Christ in his incarnation, how that of the prophet was verified, *Isai. ix. 6. A child is born to us, and a Son is given to us, and the government is upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, God, the Mighty, the Father of the world to come, the Prince of Peace.* Yes, Christians, these great titles, here bestowed on your Saviour by the Spirit of God, abundantly declare, both the wonders that God wrought for him, and those which through his incarnation he has wrought also for you, in giving him to you; that he might be not only your Saviour, your Redeemer, and your deliverer; but also your king, your law-giver, your teacher, your model, your advocate, your physician, your friend, your high-priest, and your victim, your father, and your head: in a word, the source of all your good; the way, the truth, and the life, in your regard; by whom alone you can go to God. And do not all these great things, effected

by the incarnation of the Son of God, shew forth the power, the wisdom, the mercy, and goodness of God, with all the other divine attributes, infinitely more than any of the rest of the works of the Almighty?

Conclude to honour, by a lively faith, by a serious and frequent meditation, and a sincere devotion, all these wonders of God, wrought in the incarnation of his Son; both in favour of him and of us: and to lead henceforward such lives as become those, who by this mystery have been so highly exalted, and brought so near to the very source of all grace and sanctity.

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*On the glory of God in the Incarnation of his Son.*

Dec. 14. **C**ONSIDER first, how the Angels, upon occasion of the birth of Christ, sung forth that blessed hymn, recorded *Luke ii. 14.* *Glory to God on high, and on earth peace to men of good will:* to give us to understand, that the incarnation and birth of the Son of God was designed to produce those two principal fruits, the greater *glory* of God, and the *peace* and reconciliation of man with God. The glory of God shines forth most brightly in the incarnation of his Son; by the manifestation of his power, of his wisdom, of his goodness, of his justice, and of his mercy; and by setting all these his divine attributes in their most beautiful light. The almighty power of God is here manifested in all those wonders he wrought in this mystery, and especially in that greatest and most glorious of all his wonderful productions, *viz.* a *God-man*: a greater work, without comparison, than the creation of ten thousand worlds. The infinite wisdom of God is here manifested in the contrivance of this wonderful way of uniting God and man, the Creator and the creature, which were at an infinite distance from each other, so closely together, as to be but one and the same person; and of reconciling, by this means,

man, who was fallen from God by sin, in such manner, as that without his divine Majesty's departing, in the least tittle, from what was due to the reparation of his glory; he should continually receive from this one man, for every moment of time and eternity, a homage of adoration, praise, thanksgiving, and love, infinitely more glorious to the Deity, than all the homages of ten thousand worlds could be; though they were all full of angels and men, eternally employed in nothing else but in glorifying God.

Consider 2dly, with relation to the other attributes of God; viz. his goodness, his mercy, and his justice; how brightly they also shine forth in the incarnation of his Son: in which, according to the Psalmist, (*Ps. lxxxiv*) *Mercy and truth met each other: justice and peace have kissed.* The infinite goodness of God never manifested itself so clearly, as in giving his only Son to us, by the mystery of his incarnation, to deliver us from all our evils, and to bring with him all good to us, in order to make us happy for eternity. The infinite mercy of God is set in no less clear a light by this mystery; in his here furnishing us, out of pure compassion, without any regard at all to our merits, with such and so great a Redeemer, to be both our priest, and our sacrifice, for a propitiation for all our sins. And as to the infinite justice of God, so far from its being set aside in this mystery, or forgetting its right, it never exerted, or manifested itself more, than when it insisted upon such a satisfaction for sin, as could not be paid by any lesser or meaner person than a God made man. So that the justice of God has been in effect more evidently demonstrated by the incarnation of the Son of God coming down here amongst us, to be made a bleeding victim for our sins, than by any other judgments or punishments whatsoever, that either have, or ever could be inflicted by the

Divine Majesty, either in time or eternity, for the sins of men.

Consider Sdly, that the infinite dignity of the person of this God man, as it gives an infinite dignity and worth to all his performances; even to every thought, word, or action, and every suffering of his: so it is an inexhaustible source, from which continually and eternally flows an infinite glory to God, from every thought, word, action, or suffering of his Son; even from the moment of his conception till his expiring upon the cross; as well as to all that adoration, praise, glory, thanksgiving, &c. which as man he shall present to his Father, for all eternity. See then, my soul, how very much the incarnation of the Son of God has advanced the glory of his Father; since every motion of the heart of this God made man, gives in effect infinitely more glory to the Father, both in time and eternity, than all the adorations and praises of millions of angels, and millions of worlds could ever have done, though eternally employed in nothing else but in glorifying God. Besides all that glory, which the Son of God incarnate has procured for his Father, by his gospel, by his worship, which he has established here upon earth, by that great sacrifice of his body and blood, offered up daily on a million of altars, &c. and that kingdom of souls, which he has here purchased, to be delivered up hereafter to his Father, to glorify him for all eternity.

Conclude to rejoice in this great glory, which the Son of God has procured both for his Father and for himself, by his incarnation: and sing to him, with the angels, hymns of perpetual praise, for his having so well associated together, in this mystery, his own glory with thy peace and salvation.

*On the Glory the Son of God gave to his Father, in his Mother's Womb.*

Dec. 15. **C**ONSIDER first; that as the soul of Christ, from the first instant of his conception, by being assumed to the divine Person of the Word, was full of all light and knowledge, and consequently enjoyed from the beginning the perfect use of reason and understanding: so the inward powers and faculties of his soul, from the first instant of his conception, were always employed; they were never idle. Now as the great design of God, in the incarnation of his Son, was his own glory, and the redemption of man: so the continual occupation of the Son of God made man, was the procuring of his Father's glory and man's salvation: from the very first moment that his soul received a being by creation, this was his perpetual employment. It was from the beginning the indispensable duty, both of angels and men, in their first creation, to turn themselves immediately to God, by adoration, oblation, and love; and to dedicate themselves eternally to him and to his glory. The omission of this at first, was the cause of the condemnation of Lucifer and his companions: and the like omission is to this day the cause of the condemnation of millions of men, who unhappily turn themselves away from God, for the sake of the creature. But the soul of Christ, our great deliverer, and our most perfect model and pattern, has taught us better things, by his nine months occupation in the virgin's womb: where, silent as he is, he preaches to us admirable lessons, with regard to the glory we ought at all times to give to God.

Consider 2dly, that these lessons, which the Son of God teaches us, by his great example, in his mother's womb, are contained in the different acts of virtue in which he there spent his time. He began, as we learn from the psalmist, (Ps. xxxix. 7, 8, 9.) by offering himself to his Father, without reserve, to

do all his will: he embraced this will in the midst of his heart: he substituted himself in the place of all the ancient sacrifices, to be the great *burnt-offering* and *sin-offering*, that should be immolated for God's glory, and for the expiation of the sins of the world: he presented his *body*, just then formed by the Holy Ghost, with his *ears pierced*, (as it was prescribed in the law, with relation to such as yielded themselves up to be servants for ever, *Deut. xv. 17.*) to be entirely at the disposal of his Father, a perpetual servant, obedient *unto death, even unto the death of the cross*. O let us hear from himself these his dispositions, *Sacrifice and oblation thou didst not desire: but thou hast pierced ears for me. Burnt-offering and sin-offering thou didst not require; then said I, behold I come. In the head of the book it is written of me that I should do thy will: O my God, I have desired it, and thy will in the midst of my heart. O, my soul, how happy shall we be, if we labour in good earnest to imitate those dispositions of our dear Jesus, by embracing, like him, the will of God and his holy law in the midst of our hearts; and offering ourselves, without reserve, to be at all times his devoted servants!*

Consider 1<sup>stly</sup>, that infinite glory which our Lord gave to his Father all the time he was in his mother's womb: first by the acts of *adoration and homage*; which as man, he continually paid to God; perfectly annihilating himself in his sight, and continually bowing down all the powers of his soul, to offer him a most acceptable worship, worthy of his divine majesty: 2<sup>dly</sup>, by acts of *praise and thanksgiving*, which he offered up both for himself, and for the whole creation: 3<sup>dly</sup>, by acts of *oblation*, and eternal *dedication* of himself to his Father; to be ever his, both in life and death; both in time and eternity; with a total consecration of his whole soul and body; of his whole will, memory, and understanding; of all his senses and faculties; and of all his thoughts, words, and deeds, to his divine service: 4<sup>thly</sup>, by

acts of a most pure and most perfect love, zeal, and desire, of ever promoting, in all things, and above all things, the *sanctification of the name of God*, the *propagation of his kingdom*, and the *doing his will upon earth*, as it is in *heaven*. Such acts as these, joined with acts of charity, and prayer for us poor sinners, were the perpetual occupation of Christ our Lord in his mother's womb. A happy employment indeed, and most worthy of our imitation at all times !

Conclude to embrace, and to follow in the practice of thy life, these heavenly lessons which the Son of God teaches thee by his divine example from his mother's womb : no other exercises can be either more agreeable to him or to his Father, or more advantageous to thyself.

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*On the Charity of the Son of God for us, in his Mother's Womb.*

Dec. 16. **C**ONSIDER first, that as the soul of the Son of God, from the first instant of his conception in his mother's womb, was ever employed in the love of his heavenly Father, and in a perpetual adoration, and oblation of himself to his most holy will ; so for the love of his Father, and in consequence of his holy will, he was also employed from the beginning in the love of us, and in the perpetual exercises of an unbounded charity, in our regard. His soul, in the instant it received a being, was assumed to the divine Person of the Word ; and in the light of this eternal Word clearly saw, readily submitted to, lovingly embraced, with an *Ecce venio, Behold I come*, that most sacred and adorable decree of the whole blessed Trinity, by which it was ordained that the Son of God should become man, for the reparation of the honour and glory of God, infinitely injured, and outraged by man ; and that he should be the Saviour and Redeemer of all mankind : that he should take upon him all their sins, to be cancelled with his blood :



that by his death, he should rescue them from the tyranny of Satan and sin, and a second and everlasting death; and should open in their favour the gates of mercy, grace, and salvation: in a word, that he should be the great Mediator of God and men; their High-priest and Victim. In consequence of, and in obedience to this heavenly decree, he immediately began, from the first instant of his conception, to exercise himself in all such acts of charity for us, as were agreeable to this his office of our Saviour and Mediator, which he ever joined with a perpetual attention to his Father's glory. This was his continual employment in his mother's womb; this was his continual employment, all the time of his life. O let all heaven and earth eternally acknowledge, praise, and bless, this his infinite charity!

Consider 2dly, what these acts of charity were, which the Son of God continually exercised in our regard, from the first instant of his conception.

1. He had us always before his eyes, and in the midst of his heart; he was not one moment without thinking of us. 2. He was perpetually praying for us, that we might be delivered from all our evils, and brought, through him, to all good. 3. He had a most tender compassion for all our miseries, considering us all as his brethren; and he continually bewailed our sins. 4. He offered himself, without ceasing, to the justice of his Father, to suffer all that he pleased, for the expiation of our sins: he had even a longing desire (such was the excess of his love) for the accomplishment of that baptism with which he was to be one day baptized in his blood; because thereby he was to redeem us from our sins. See, my soul, how very early our dear Jesus began to shew himself a Jesus, that is a *Saviour*, to us. See how affectionately, and effectually too, he has loved us, even from his first conception in his mother's womb. And have we hitherto been sensible of these wonders of his love for us? Have we ever yet given to him a proper place in our heart, who has been so much

beforehand with us, as to admit us, from the beginning, into the center of his? O let us detest our past ingratitude in this regard, and henceforward at least yield ourselves up without reserve captives to his love!

Consider 3dly, in particular, the sentiments which the soul of our blessed Saviour had, with regard to our sins, and in what manner he was affected by them, even from his first conception. He had even then a clear sight, and a most lively sense of all the sins of the whole world, from the first to the last. He saw them all, in the light of God, with all their aggravations, and all their deformity, and infinite malice, from their opposition to the infinite goodness of God. He saw the outrages they all offered to the divine Majesty, and how odious they were all in his eyes. And he saw at the same time all the havoc they made in the souls of men, made after God's own image and likeness, and all their dreadful consequences, both for time and eternity. But O what tongue can express, or heart conceive, how strangely his soul was affected with this sight? His love for his heavenly Father on the one hand, and his zeal for his glory, gave him an inexpressible hatred and horror for all these enemies of God, these high treasons against the divine Majesty. And again, his love for us, and concern for our salvation, on the other hand, filled him with more than mortal grief and anguish, for the general corruption with which he saw the whole world infected, and the loss of so many millions of souls. His horror and hatred for our sins was equal to the love he bore to his Father: and the grief and anguish which he continually endured for them, was equal to his love for us; even that love which made him give himself up to the worst of deaths, to cancel our sins with his own blood. Thus between the love of his Father, and the love of us, the Son of God lived in a state of continual suffering, even in his mother's womb; and of such bitter sufferings, as nothing but his love could have endured. O Christi-

ans, learn here from your dear Redeemer, in what manner you ought to be affected with the thought of your sins! *Learn to hate* and detest them above all things, as enemies of your God; learn to hate and to detest them as your mortal enemies, and to bewail them all your life time.

Conclude to embrace the divine charity of the Son of God with all the affection of your soul, which has thus exerted itself, even from his mother's womb, in favour of you. But remember that he expects of you a continual return of love, and this, with your whole heart: and that nothing less will content him.

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*On the Benefits which the Son of God brings to us by his Incarnation.*

Dec. 17. **C**ONSIDER first, that man in his first creation was highly favoured by his Maker, and elevated by him to a supernatural end; he was enriched with the treasures of original grace and justice, and sanctity, and destined to an eternal life with the living God: in the mean time he was placed in the earthly paradise, as in a shadow of that happy life, where, if he had kept the law of his great Creator, he might have fed upon the tree of life, and so have passed to a better paradise of a true and everlasting life, without going through the gate of death. But alas! by falling from his God by sin, he forfeited all these treasures, and all these advantages: he was stript at once of all the goods of grace; he was strangely wounded in all the powers and faculties of his soul; his understanding was overclouded with ignorance, and deluded with a variety of errors: his memory and imagination was distracted with empty toys and vanities, and hurried away from the remembrance of his God; his will was perverted with malice; his interior appetite disordered with rebellious passions; and his whole soul became weak beyond expression, to every thing of good, and strongly bent upon all evil. Thus had unhappy man, by his apostacy from God, lost both his God, and

all his good; and had incurred all kind of evils, both of soul and body, for time and eternity: thus in losing of God, he had fallen into the hands of four merciless enemies, sin and Satan, death and hell. Now the Son of God, by his incarnation, came down amongst us in order to deliver us from all these evils, which we had incurred by sin; to reconcile us to our God, and to restore us, with infinite advantage, to all that good, for which we were first created. What reasons then have we, my soul, to rejoice in this incarnation of the Son of God, the sovereign means of all our good, and the source of all mercy, grace, and salvation to us! O what praise and thanksgiving, what perpetual love and service do we owe to this our great deliverer!

Consider 2dly, how the Son of God, coming amongst us by his incarnation, has brought us from heaven most sovereign and effectual remedies for all our evils. He brought *light* to us, who were sitting before in darkness, and in the shadow of death: coming in quality of our *teacher*, (both by word and example); of the great *prophet* sent to us from God; of our *Lawgiver* and our *Apostle*: and declaring to us the whole will of God. He brought with him also our *ransom*, to redeem us from our *slavery* to Satan and sin, and to make us free indeed: he was sent to *preach deliverance to the captives, and sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, and to preach the acceptable year of our Lord*; even the great *jubilee* of a general remission of all our debts, and a general loosing of all our bands, *Luke iv. 19.* He came as our *physician*, to heal all our maladies with medicines made up with his own most sacred blood. *We were wandering in a wilderness, in a place without water, Ps. cvi. We could find no way to a city for our habitation, (our true and everlasting home); we were hungry and thirsty, (destitute of all proper food for our souls) and were bound in want, and in irons: we were brought low with labours, and weakened; and there was none to help us.* And he

came to deliver us out of all these our distresses : to lead us into the right way, to conduct us to our true country ; to feed our hungry souls with good things ; to break our bonds in sunder ; to bring us refreshment, comfort, and rest from our labours ; to satisfy all our wants ; to redress all our miseries ; to cure our weakness with his strength ; and to raise us up from death to life. All this, and much more, has the Son of God effected in our favour, by coming down from heaven, to be our *Emmanuel*, that is, to be *God with us*. And shall we not then, my soul, join with the psalmist in frequently repeating, in admiration at all these wonders of the divine goodness, that sacred hymn : *Let the mercies of the Lord give glory to him : and his wonderful works to the children of men. Let them exalt him in the church of the people, and praise him in the choir of the ancients. Let them sacrifice to him a sacrifice of praise, and declare his works with joy. O give glory to the Lord, for he is good, for his mercy endureth for ever. Let them say so, that have been redeemed by the Lord ; whom he hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy, and gathered out of all countries, Ps. cvi.* Yea, let them say so, and sing forth the mercies of the Lord for all eternity. Amen, Amen.

Consider 3dly, that however great and inexpressible all these graces and benefits are ; which the Son of God has brought with him by his incarnation, in order to deliver us from all our evils, and to communicate to us all his goods ; yet none of them all, nor all of them together, will effectually save us, without our consent and concurrence, and a due correspondence on our part with his mercy and grace ; by our yielding ourselves up entirely to him, by faith and obedience. For what will it avail us to have the light come down from heaven, to shine upon us, if we shut our eyes against, and love the darkness more than light ? Or what shall we be the better, for the ransom, which our Redeemer brings with him, and lays down for us, if we prefer our

slavery and our chains before the liberty of the children of God; and rather choose to stay with our old masters, Satan and sin, amongst the husks of swine, than to go along with our Deliverer, who desires to carry us home to his Father's house? Alas! so far from being the better for all these graces and benefits brought us by our Redeemer, we should indeed be much the worse, if we should receive them all in vain; and by our ingratitude, and obstinacy in sin, pervert them to our greater condemnation. For what greater perversity can there be, than that we should know that *the way, the truth, and the life*, is come down from heaven in our favour, and should still choose to go astray from *the way*, and to follow the father of lies into the regions of death?

Conclude to embrace in such manner your great Deliverer, who comes by his incarnation to be your Emmanuel (*God with us*) by a faithful and diligent correspondence with all his mercies and graces; as that he *may be always with you*, and you *may be always with him*; and that nothing in life or death may ever separate you from him any more.

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*On other Benefits of our Saviour to Mankind by his Incarnation.*

Dec. 18. **C**ONSIDER first, that the Son of God, by his incarnation, came amongst us to be *the father*, and *the head* of all mankind, according to the spirit, and according to grace, as Adam was according to the flesh, and according to nature. He came as the *second Adam*, to undo all that *evil*, which the *first Adam* had done, and brought upon us all; and to impart to us all that *good*, which the father of our flesh had deprived us of. That *as by one man sin entered into this world, and by sin death*; and so both sin and death passed upon all men; justice and grace should in like manner enter into this world by one man, in order to our eternal life. Hence, in quality of our *Father*, he imparts to us a new generation, a second birth; by

which we, who by our natural birth (by which we descend from the first Adam) are children of wrath, corrupted by sin, and condemned to hell; are born again by grace, cleansed from sin by his blood, incorporated in him, made children of God, and heirs of everlasting life. In quality of our *head*, he communicates to us all manner of graces, which in virtue of his merits, are derived from him upon all the members of his mystical body, who by faith and obedience adhere to him, *St. John xv. 4, 5.*

Consider 2dly, the other near relations, marked down in the word of God, which our Lord has been pleased we should have with him, by means of his incarnation: such as that of our being now his *brethren*, (as he has been pleased to call us, *Ps. xxi. I will declare thy name to my brethren*) by his taking our flesh and blood. A relation which gives us an honour, not granted to the angels, of being near akin, even by consanguinity, to the Son of God himself: for he never took upon him the nature of the angels, but took our nature, that he might be like to us in all things, excepting sin. For so it behoved him, that was to be our High-priest, to make a reconciliation for our sins, *Heb. ii. 16, 17.* He is our elder brother, in the order of God's election, *the first-born amongst many brethren*, (*Rom. viii. 29.*) in whom, and for whose sake, we also are elected; to be conformable to his image, here by grace, and hereafter in glory, through him. In this quality of our eldest brother, he is also our priest (as under the law of nature, before the written law, the first-born were priests) to officiate for us *in all things that appertain to God*, (*Heb. v. 1.*) as also our prince, our leader, and captain in our warfare, our tutor and governor, our truest friend, to promote all our interest, to manage all our causes, to defend us from all our enemies, and to bring us on in our pilgrimage, till he presents us to his Father, and our Father, in his eternal kingdom. O how happy are we in such a brother!

Consider 3dly, that by means of the incarnation of the Son of God, we are related to him, not only as children to our father, as members to our head, and as brothers to our eldest brother, but also as a holy building to our foundation, in which he is the corner stone; in whom all the building framed together groweth up into a holy temple in the Lord—a habitation of God in the spirit, (Eph. ii. 20, 21, 22.) and as branches to the stock, into which we are ingrafted, and planted by baptism. Hence our Lord tells us, (John xv. 4, 5.) *Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; so neither can you except you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches: he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same beareth much fruit: for without me you can do nothing.* But of all the relations we have to the Son of God, in consequence of his incarnation, there is none more endearing than that of our being made his spouse: the church being the bride, the wife of the Lamb, brought out of his side, as Eve was from the side of Adam, cast into the deep sleep of death upon the cross, and espoused to him by an everlasting and inviolable contract, of which Christian matrimony is the sacred and mysterious sign: and every particular soul, that is in the state of grace, partaking in the dignity and happiness of this near and dear relation of spouses to the Lamb of God. Christians, are you sensible how great this dignity and happiness is, for your souls to be espoused to the Son of God; in consequence of which you should be *one spirit* with Christ, as Adam and Eve were *one flesh*. O take care to be ever faithful and true to this divine Spouse, who has loved you, and delivered himself up for you, that he might sanctify you, and cleanse you for himself with his own most precious blood.

Conclude to behave, in your whole life and conversation, agreeably, in all respects, to these sacred relations, which you now have with the Son of God; and never to degenerate from such a father, such a



head, such a brother, and such a spouse, by any actions unworthy of either the dignity or sanctity of a Christian.

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*On our Saviour as our King and our Priest.*

Dec. 19. **C**ONSIDER first, that the Son of God, by his incarnation, came also amongst us, to be both our *King*, and our *Priest*; and in these qualities, to impart all blessings to us; and even to make us also kings and priests to his Father, *Apoc. i. 6.* He is our true *Melchisedech*, sovereign King and High-priest for ever: he is the true *King of Justice, and King of Peace*; of whose reign there shall be no end. He came, by his incarnation, to dethrone the usurper Satan, and to establish amongst us the kingdom of grace, by which he reigns in all the souls of his true subjects. For *his kingdom is not of this world*; nor like to any of these petty kingdoms of this world: but is of a far more excellent constitution, a more noble foundation, and a more extensive dominion, reaching to all nations, and to all ages: it is never to be conquered; it shall be glorious for evermore. Of this great King, and his reign, the Royal Prophet sings, (*Ps. lxxi.*)  
 ' Give to the king thy judgment, O God—to judge  
 ' thy people with justice, and thy poor with judgment. Let the mountains receive peace for the  
 ' people, and the hills justice. He shall judge the  
 ' poor of the people, and he shall save the children  
 ' of the poor, and he shall bring down the oppressor,  
 ' (the devil.) And he shall continue with the sun,  
 ' and beyond the moon, throughout all generations.  
 ' He shall come down like rain upon the fleece; and  
 ' as showers falling gently upon the earth. In  
 ' his days shall justice spring up, and abundance of  
 ' peace, till the moon be taken away. And he shall  
 ' rule from sea to sea, &c. All kings of the earth  
 ' shall adore him, all nations shall serve him. For  
 ' he shall deliver the poor from the mighty—and he

‘ shall save the souls of the poor. He shall redeem their souls from usuries and iniquities, and their name shall be honourable in his sight.’ Such, Christians, is our great King, who shall rule us for evermore ; and such are the blessings he brings us by his reign : according to what is written in the same psalm, *In him shall all the tribes of the earth be blessed.* O let his name then be blessed for evermore ; and blessed be his heavenly Father, who worketh these wonderful things in our favour. Yea, blessed be the name of his Majesty, for ever ; and let the whole earth be filled with his glory. So be it. So be it.

Consider 2dly, that the Son of God, incarnate for us, is not only our King; he is our priest too, the High-priest of God and man. Now *every high-priest*, says the apostle, (Heb. v. 1.) *taken from among men, is appointed for men, in the things that appertain to God, that he may offer up gifts and sacrifices for sin.* And thus the Son of God, becoming man by his incarnation, was called by his Father, and anointed to this high-priestly office by his Holy Spirit, to execute every branch of it to the glory of his Father, and in behalf of us men. This he did *in the days of his flesh*, that is, of his mortal life, *by offering up prayers and supplications, with a strong cry and tears*, (Heb. v. 7.) ; this he did in death, by the great sacrifice, for the sins of the whole world, which he then offered upon the altar of the cross. This he still continues to do, in the sanctuary of heaven, into which he has carried the blood of his sacrifice, to be there presented before the throne of his Father : where also with this blood he continually makes intercession, for the obtaining of mercy, grace, and salvation for us. Such are the benefits which are derived upon us from the everlasting priesthood of our Lord. *Seeing then*, says the apostle, *that we have this great high-priest, that hath passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God : let us hold fast our confession. For we have not a high-priest, who cannot have compassion on our*

*infirmities ; but one tempted in all things like as we, yet without sin. Let us go therefore with confidence to the throne of grace : that we may obtain mercy, and find grace in seasonable aid, Heb. vi. 14, 15, 16.*

Consider 3dly, that Christ our Lord, not content with executing the priestly office in our behalf, whilst he was here upon earth, in his own person, and continuing to execute it himself, after his ascension, in the sanctuary of heaven : was pleased moreover, before his departure hence, to ordain others, not as his successors (for his priesthood is eternal) but as his ministers : to exercise in his name, and for the benefit of his people, all the offices and functions of the priesthood here amongst us ; he assisting and co-operating with them from heaven ; and, as he has promised, being always with them, and keeping up a perpetual succession of them, all days, even till the consummation of the world, *Matt. xxviii. 18, 19, 20.* So that we do not only owe to that great High-priest, and to his priesthood, all those blessings, which he himself in person has at any time bestowed upon mankind ; but also those many graces and spiritual benefits, which he daily confers upon us by the ministry of men, whom he has empowered and commissioned to preach his gospel, administer his sacraments, remit sins in his name, bless in his name, impart the grace of the Holy Ghost, by imposition of hands ; and to consecrate and offer up daily in his name his body and blood, for all the great ends of sacrifice. In all these offices, our Lord assists as our high-priest ; and whatsoever grace is here given to the faithful, it is all derived from his priesthood : who has imparted indeed to those whom he has made his vicegerents, the doctrine, the authority, the spirit, the anointing, and the keys of the kingdom of heaven, which he has received of his Father ; yet so that in all their performances, he himself is still the principal actor. See then, Christians, how happy we are in having such a high priest.

Conclude to keep up in your souls a grateful sense of the innumerable benefits, which have been conferred upon all mankind by the incarnation of the Son of God, by which he has become our King, and our Priest. Adhere to him in both these his qualities ; daily beg that he would establish his *reign* in you ; and by his *priesthood*, deliver you from your sins, and bring you to his Father, to be eternally his.

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*On our Saviour, as our Sacrifice.*

Dec. 20. **C**ONSIDER first, that the Son of God, by his incarnation, did not only come amongst us to be our king and our priest, but to be our sacrifice too ; and in that quality to be an inexhaustible source of all good to our souls. Man, from the beginning, always owed to his God the homage of adoration, praise, and glory ; he was ever bound to make him the best offerings he was able ; he owed his God perpetual thanksgiving for his perpetual goodness and bounty to him ; and he was ever bound to acknowledge, by prayer, his total dependance upon this giver of all good gifts, without whom he could do nothing. But after sin, he contracted a new debt, by which he was bound to make satisfaction also to the divine justice, for the offence he had committed. Hence we find from the beginning of the world, frequent mention in the scriptures of sacrifices offered to God : hence, in the law, were so many ordinances relating to burnt-offerings, sin-offerings, and peace-offerings ; as so many different kinds of sacrifices, to answer the different branches of man's duty to his Maker. But alas ! how little proportion was there in all, or any of these ancient sacrifices, with those great ends for which they were offered ? How insignificant in itself (abstracting from that sacrifice to come, of which they were all types) was all that homage, adoration, glory, and thanksgiving, which was paid to the infinite majesty of God, by these oblations of oxen, goats, and sheep. How much less could the blood of oxen or the blood of

*goats take away sins*; or be a proper atonement for the great sin of the world, by which man had fallen from his God. Therefore the Son of God came, by his incarnation, to make himself the victim and sacrifice of all mankind; to substitute himself instead of all those ancient burnt-offerings, sin-offerings, and peace-offerings; to answer in a most perfect manner all the ends of sacrifice; and to wash away all our sins with his own most precious blood. O blessed be his name, through all generations, for this, his infinite goodness to us!

Consider 2dly, what great things the Son of God has done for us all, in making himself our sacrifice; and what great things he has enabled us to do, by virtue of his sacrifice. In dying for us upon the cross, he has made himself a *holocaust*, or *whole burnt-offering*, for us, of most sweet savour to his heavenly Father: a sacrifice of *homage, adoration, praise, and glory*, worthy of the infinite majesty of God; because of the infinite dignity both of the offerer, and of the offering. In bowing down his head, and yielding up his spirit for us, by his death, he has also made an oblation of himself, infinitely agreeable to his Father, for all the other ends of sacrifice; here he offered a *thanksgiving*, truly worthy of God, both for himself, and for us: a *peace-offering*, of infinite value, for purchasing *peace*, and all happiness for us; and for opening in our favour all the fountains of grace and life: and particularly he here made himself a *sin-offering* for us all; a *victim of propitiation* of infinite virtue, for taking away all the sins of the world, and recoucing, and bringing back lost man to an eternal union with his God. And this great sacrifice of his, with all its fruits, he has in such manner made over to us, as to authorize and enable us to offer up the same sacrifice with him, and in his name, to his Father, for all the same ends as he did; and to give thereby infinite glory to God; and to procure infinite blessings to ourselves and to all the world.

Consider 3dly, that this sacrifice, which Christ our Lord offered up to his Father, on the altar of the cross, (as a homage and adoration, which, as man, he paid to him by his death; as a thanks-offering of infinite value; as an atonement for sin, more than sufficient to cancel the sins of ten thousand worlds, though infinite in malice; and as an oblation of infinite merit, in the way of prayer, and impetration of all graces and blessings from God, for all mankind, both for time and eternity) did not expire by his death, no more than his priesthood did. The whole victim of his sacrifice was restored to him again, at his resurrection, and he has carried it with him, at his ascension, into the sanctuary of heaven: where, with it, he continually gives adoration and thanks to his Father, both in his own and our name; and continually pleads for mercy and grace for us. But this is not all: he has also appointed this same sacrifice to be kept up for ever in his church, in the sacred mysteries; and to be offered up daily, for the like intentions, on thousands of altars, in all nations, as long as the world shall endure: himself in person, though invisibly, officiating therein, both as priest and victim, both as offerer and offering. See then, my soul, if any thing more can be desired to make us completely happy, who have continually amongst us such a sacrifice, in which we have the source of all happiness, and the sovereign means of all good.

Conclude never to be wanting, on thy part, in a due correspondence with all these graces and blessings of heaven, which the Son of God has purchased for thee by his sacrifice; and which he daily seeks to enrich thee with, by the application of the fruits of his sacrifice, in the daily oblation of his own body and blood. O learn then, my soul, to unite all thy performances with those of the Son of God incarnate for the love of thee; and daily offer thyself with him, who daily offers himself in sacrifice for the love of thee! Unite all thy adoration, praise, and thanksgiving, with that which thy Saviour, as man, conti-

nually presents to his Father in heaven, and with all that which he daily offers him, on a million of altars, here upon earth: and thy adoration, praise, and thanksgiving shall not fail of being accepted of. In like manner unite all thy prayers and supplications for mercy with those of Jesus Christ, and with his sacrifice; and thou shalt always find through him both mercy and grace.

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*On St. Thomas the Apostle.*

Dec. 21. **C**ONSIDER first, that in celebrating the festivals of the saints, we must principally have in view the glorifying of the God of the saints, and the giving him thanks for the wonders of his grace in them; and all that glory to which he has exalted them; and with which he has crowned them to all eternity. Now God is wonderful indeed in all his saints; but in none more than in the apostles; whom he raised from the lowest and meanest condition in life, as it were from the earth and from the dunghill, to make them the princes of his people; the pillars and foundations of his church: prodigies of his grace; full of his divine spirit; dispensers of all his treasures; and workers of all kind of wonders here upon earth: and now has exalted to sit with him on his throne in heaven, to come one day with him to be the judges both of men and angels. See then, Christians, what subjects we have to meditate upon, on the festivals of the apostles; what motives we have to praise and glorify God for all he has done for them, and through them for us all; what encouragements we here have, however mean and poor we may be in all that is good, to rely on the power, goodness, and mercy of our God; who loves to work his greatest wonders in favour of such as are little and humble: and what lessons we have for our instruction, and our imitation, in the ready correspondence of the apostles with divine grace, and their diligent co-operation with it unto the end.

Consider 2dly, from the epistle read on this day (*Eph. ii. 19*) the great advantages we have received through the ministry of the apostles, in being called to the Christian religion, of which they were the first preachers and teachers. For now, says St. Paul, speaking to all Christians, *you are no more strangers and foreigners; but you are fellow-citizens with the saints and domesticks of God; built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus-Christ himself being the chief corner stone: in whom all the building framed together groweth up into a holy temple in the Lord, &c.* Yes, Christians, it was by the ministry of the apostles we were originally brought to all this good: and as the same apostle adds, (*Heb. xii. 21.*) by our admission into the church of God, we are now come to mount Sion, and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to the company of many thousands of angels, and to the church of the first-born, who are written in heaven, and to God the judge of all; and to the spirits of the just made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of the new testament, and to the sprinkling of blood, which speaketh better than that of Abel: viz. by crying to heaven for mercy, and not for justice. O happy communion of saints! A communion in all that is good, with all that are good: to which we have been introduced by the apostles of Christ. O glory for evermore be to their Lord, the author of all their good, and of all our good!

Consider 3dly, the particular lessons which St. Thomas teaches us by his example. When the other disciples opposed our Saviour's going back to Jerusalem, where the Jews had lately sought his death, St. Thomas alone generously said: *Let us also go, that we may die with him,* John xi. 16. Such was his love for his master, and such his courage in his cause. Are we in the like dispositions? Are we willing to die with Christ, or for Christ, when we are frightened with every little difficulty or danger; and ever ready to turn our backs upon him rather



thau to risk any thing for him; or part with our own humour or satisfaction for the love of him? St. Thomas was slow of belief, with regard to the resurrection of our Lord; till he was favoured both with the sight of him, and the handling of his wounds: but then he yielded himself up immediately, and cried out with a most lively faith, and ardent love, *my Lord and my God!* This lively faith, and ardent love, continued with him, ever growing and increasing; and carried him through all his apostolic labours, amongst so many barbarous nations, (to which he is said to have preached the gospel) and through all his sufferings, till, by a glorious martyrdom, it brought him to his Lord, and eternally united him to him. O that we had but some little share in this lively faith and ardent love! It would make all our labours and sufferings easy to us, and bring us also to our Lord.

Conclude so to glorify God in this saint, as to encourage thyself also to walk in his footsteps, by an imitation of his virtues; in hopes of sharing in his happiness: and for this end, ever beg his prayers and intercession.

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*On the Ember Week in Advent.*

Dec. 22. **C**ONSIDER first, that the ember weeks, at the four seasons of the year, are times set aside by the church, from the earliest ages, for fasting and prayer. The primitive church had that zealous regard for the glory of God, and the sanctification of the souls of her children, by training them up to these religious exercises, so much recommended by the word of God, that she would not suffer any of the four parts of the year to pass, without calling upon them all to sanctify one week at least, by more than ordinary devotion; and by an offering up to God therein the tribute of a penitential fast. In which she had also moreover in view, that by their diligence in this practice, her children might draw down a blessing from God, on all their labours,

and on the fruits of the earth; that they might give thanks for the blessings already received, and implore the divine mercy for the forgiveness of the sins they were continually committing. Christians, let us, at these holy times, enter into these views of our holy mother the church: and by joining as it were in a body, with all the people of God upon earth, in fasting, in alms-deeds, and in humble prayer, make the best return we are able to the giver of all good gifts, for all his benefits; beg a continuance of his graces and blessings; and the pardon of all our sins; through the merits of the passion and death of his only Son our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Consider 2dly, that these penitential fasts, of the ember weeks, are also instituted in order to turn away the judgments of God; which we have too great reason to apprehend may be hanging over our heads on account of our sins. For if we duly consider the multitude, and enormity of the crimes, that are daily and hourly committed amongst Christians, of all degrees and conditions; crimes that continually cry to heaven for vengeance; and how few there are in comparison, that are not frequently falling into mortal sin, in one shape or another: we cannot but fear lest the very worst of God's judgments may be speedily falling upon Christendom, if not averted by prayer and penance. It is then not only a duty of obedience to our mother the church: but a charity also that we owe both to ourselves and to our neighbours, to join at these times in prayer and penance; in order to prevent those dismal visitations of the divine justice: and to turn now to the Lord, with our whole heart, in fasting, and weeping, and mourning, as the prophet admonishes; (*Joel ii.*) that so by entering into dispositions of true penitents, and seriously turning away from the evil of our sins, we may prevail with our merciful God to turn away also his scourges from us, which we have deserved by our sins. O that Christians would remember this on all their days of fasting; and would always enter into

the true spirit of these institutions, chiefly designed for the abolishing sin, and appeasing the divine justice! Thus would they offer up to God such a fast as he has chosen. Thus would their fastings draw down a blessing from him.

Consider 3dly, that the ember weeks are also set aside by the church of Christ for the times of giving holy orders; which, by apostolical tradition, and by the example of the apostles, ought to be accompanied with prayer and fasting, *Acts* xiii. 2, 3. xiv. 22. Yes, Christians, as there is not any one thing, on which both the general good of the whole church, and the welfare of every soul in particular, so much depends, as upon having saints for our pastors; and such as may be men according to God's own heart; who both by word and work may continually promote the glory of God, and the salvation of souls: so there is not any one thing which more pressingly calls for our prayers and fasting, than the obtaining of such pastors from God. This should indeed have a great part in our devotions at all times: but more especially at these times of their ordination. Bad priests are sometimes permitted by God, as one of his most dreadful judgments upon the sins of the people. It is the business then of all Christians, by praying well, and living well, to avert this judgment, and to obtain better guides.

Conclude to labour, by more than ordinary devotion and penance, at these holy times, to answer all the ends of these ancient institutions. This ember week in particular, and all the latter parts of advent, (that is, twelve whole days before Christmas) by an ancient custom of the primitive English church, was dedicated by our catholic ancestors to fasting, watchings, prayer, and alms: and all the faithful, at this time, betook themselves to confession and penance, in order to prepare themselves for a worthy participation of the body of the Lord on Christmas-day. As we learn from B. Egbert, who was archbishop of York above a thousand years ago (*in Dialogo de ec-*

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*clesiasticâ institutione*). O how much have we degenerated from this ancient piety!

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*On the Preparation for the Birth of Christ.*

Dec. 23. **C**ONSIDER first, that when the time drew near in which the world was to be blessed with the birth of our Saviour, the Blessed Virgin, who bore him in her womb, and her chaste spouse, St. Joseph, in obedience to the edict of the emperor Augustus, took a journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem, there to be enrolled in the city of David, as they were both of them of the royal stock of David. The emperor, in giving out these orders, had no other view than the gratifying his vanity, or his avarice, by the tax imposed on that occasion. But God, who had ordained, and foretold long before by his prophet Micheas; that his Son should be born in Bethlehem, was pleased to bring about his eternal decrees in this manner; and to prepare, by this occasion, a place for his birth suitable to the great designs for which he sent him into this world. For behold after a long and wearisome winter's journey, when the Blessed Mother, with the Son of God in her womb, was arrived at Bethlehem, the town was full; and none of the inhabitants, not even of their own kindred and family, would receive them into their houses, or give them any entertainment: the very inns would not lodge them: *there was no room for them*. O ye heavens, stand astonished to see the Son of God, the Lord and Maker of heaven and earth, thus debase himself, from the very beginning, as not to allow himself, even in his very birth, any of the common conveniences of life; no not so much as a house to cover his head! O let him be so much the more dear to us, by how much he has made himself more mean and contemptible for the love of us!

Consider 2dly, what kind of a palace the King of heaven prepared on this occasion for the birth of his Son. St. Joseph, after seeking in vain for a lodging

in the town, found out at last an open stable, or stall for beasts, exposed on all sides to the inclemency of the weather; which, for want of better accommodation, their poverty and humility were contented to take up with. And this was the palace the divine wisdom made choice of for the birth of our great king: the manger here, which had served for the ox and the ass, was the royal bed of state, in which he was first laid upon his coming down amongst us. O how has the Word incarnate here annihilated himself for us! O how loudly has he condemned, from his very birth, our corrupt self-love in all its branches; with all the maxims of worldly pride, and the favourite inclinations of flesh and blood! Man fell originally from God by proudly affecting a superior excellence which might make him like to God, by coveting to have what God did not allow him, and by seeking to gratify his sensual appetite with the forbidden fruit: therefore the Son of God begins his mortal life by the exercise of a most profound humility, to cure our pride; by embracing a voluntary poverty, even to the want of all things, in opposition to our covetousness, and love of the mammon of the world; and by choosing for himself hardships and sufferings, in opposition to our love of sensual and worldly pleasures. O let us study well these lessons which this heavenly master begins to teach us by his great example, even from his first appearance amongst us!

Consider 3dly, Christian souls, that the Son of God, who heretofore came down from heaven to be born into this world, *for you*, earnestly desires at present to be spiritually born *in you*. See then, that you correspond, on your part, with this his earnest desire, by preparing your souls for him, and giving them up to him. O be not like those unhappy Bethlehemites, who refused him a place in their houses, and would not find any room for him! But then, if you are willing to admit him, take care to discharge from your inward house all such company as is disagreeable to him. For how great soever his

desire is of coming and being spiritually born in your souls, he will not come thither as long as you wilfully entertain there his and your mortal enemies, *the concupiscence of the flesh, the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life*: those very enemies, whom he came from heaven to fight against; and against whom he has declared an eternal war, by the austerity, poverty, and humility of his birth, of his education, and of his whole life and death. Moreover, if you desire to have him to abide in you, by virtue of a spiritual birth, you must allow him the chiefest place in your heart and soul, by driving far away from you all irregular affections to the world, or to any creature whatsoever. For though he did not disdain the stable, nor the crib, the ox nor the ass; he will not endure a heart divided, or occupied by unclean affections; which will not allow him the whole bed, without a partner in love.

Conclude to let nothing be wanting on your part to insure to yourselves the happiness of having the Son of God spiritually born in your soul. O invite him thither with all possible affection; ready to give up all things else that he may abide with you: and beg of him, who knows your poverty and misery, that he would prepare himself a place in you, and furnish your souls with all those ornaments of virtue and grace, which are suitable to this his spiritual birth.

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*On the Birth of Christ.*

Dec. 24. **C**ONSIDER first, that the time being now come in which the Son of God was to be born into this world, in the silence of the night, and in the obscurity of a stable, the eternal Word of God, by whom all things were made, issued out from his nine months' close confinement in his mother's womb, without any detriment of her virginal integrity; and so came to dwell amongst us. See, my soul, and contemplate with thy inward eyes this lovely babe, (O how lovely indeed, and loving

to us!) already beginning to suffer for thee, and to weep bitterly for thy sins. See how his blessed mother takes him up from the ground, shivering with cold: see with what profound reverence, on the one hand, and with what ardent love and affection on the other, she embraces him; and carefully wraps him up in swaddling clothes, and lays him in the manger. But see also, in the midst of all this poverty and humility of this new-born King, all the heavenly quires of angels and archangels, and all the Cherubims and Seraphims, descending from heaven to adore their Lord, and to sing their hymns of praise and glory to him: according to that of the apostle, (*Heb. i. 6.*) that when God brought his first-born into the world, he said: *Let all the angels of God adore him.* Christians, let us join with all these heavenly spirits: let us join with the Blessed Virgin, the mother of God, in our homage of adoration, praise, and thanksgiving to the Son of God, born into this world to be our *Emmanuel*, (*God with us*) and to save us: let us welcome him at his birth, and embrace him, with all the affection of our souls.

Consider 2dly, what we read, (*Luke ii.*) that at the time of the birth of our Lord, ‘there were in the same country shepherds watching, and keeping the night watches over their flock. And behold an angel of the Lord stood by them, and the brightness of God shone round about them, and they feared with a great fear. And the angel said to them: fear not: for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, that shall be to all the people: for this day is born to you a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord, in the city of David. And this shall be a sign unto you: you shall find the infant wrapped in swaddling clothes, and laid in a manger. And suddenly there was with the Angel a multitude of the heavenly army, praising God, and saying: glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men of good will.’ See, Christians, you study well the lessons designed for you in this whole passage. Be-

hold a heavenly messenger is here sent to carry the first news, the happy tidings, of the birth of the Son of God; born into this world to be the Saviour of the world. But to whom, do you think, does God send this joyful message, this heavenly embassy? Not to any of the great ones of this world; nor to any of the worldly wise, nor to the learned, nor to the rich, nor to any of them that lived at their ease and wallowed in sensual pleasures. No: their pride and self-conceit, their love of the world, and of the things of this world, their love of sensual and carnal pleasures, fastened them down to the earth, and disqualified them for the visits of heaven. What manner of men then were they who were favoured with this glorious vision, and this heavenly message: and in consequence of it were the first, after the Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph, that had the happiness to see and to worship the Saviour of the world; to believe in him themselves, and to preach and publish his coming to their neighbours? O they were poor, humble, harmless shepherds, *keeping the night watches over their flock*; attentive to the business of their humble calling, and likely employing that silent time of the night in joining the praises of God and prayer with the care of their sheep. Now such as these are commonly the favourites of the Most High, who *resists the proud, and gives his grace to the humble*. See, my soul, these be also thy dispositions, if thou wouldst be favoured by our Lord with his divine graces.

Consider 3dly, the words of the Angel to the shepherds: *I bring you good tidings of great joy, that shall be to all the people, for this day is born to you a Saviour*. See, Christians, what ought to be the subject of your joy, at this holy time: a Saviour is born this day to you, who comes to *save his people from their sins*; who comes to deliver you from the power and slavery of the devil, and from hell and damnation: and to bring to you mercy, grace, and salvation. O here is a just subject of true joy indeed! Not like the joys of worldlings, which are either vain



and foolish, or base and filthy; but a joy in the Lord, and in his goodness, which opens to us by this mystery the gate of joys that shall never end. O let us then join with all the heavenly quires in the sacred hymn they sung on this occasion: *Glory to God in the highest, and on earth, peace to men of good will.* Let us ever glorify him who has wrought these wonders for us; and who has sent us, by the birth of his Son, *justice and abundance of peace till the moon be taken away.* O how lovely and desirable is this peace! But it is only bestowed on *men of good will*: for *there is no peace to the wicked, saith the Lord, Isai. xlvi. 22.*

Conclude to imitate the shepherds, by going over with them in spirit to Bethlehem, this night, and there paying your homage, and making your offerings to your new-born King. The offering he calls for is that of your heart. O give it him without reserve! But let it be a loving heart, to answer that love which has brought him down from heaven to you: let it be a *contrite and humble heart*, in consideration of your ingratitude and manifold sins against him.

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#### *On Christmas-Day.*

Dec. 25. **C**ONSIDER first, that the devotion of this holy time, and of this day in particular, calls us to the crib of Béthlehem, there to contemplate our infant Saviour, and to entertain our souls with him. O what a large field have we here opened to us for our meditations! Christians, place yourselves in spirit near the manger of your Lord, and fix the eyes of your soul upon him. Reflect *who* this is, whom you see here lying before you as a helpless infant, in this open stall; suffering, and weeping, poor, and humble, wrapt up in these mean swaddling clothes, and laid in the crib between an ox and an ass? O! your faith will inform you, that under all these mean appearances here lies concealed the Lord of glory! This infant, not yet one day old, is the eternal Son of the eternal God: this

weak, helpless babe, is he who by his almighty power made both heaven and earth: he who is here wrapt up so straitly, and confined to this narrow crib, fills heaven and earth with his incomprehensible immensity: this speechless child is God's own Word, who called all things out of nothing, and whom all things obey. O wonderful mystery, which has thus joined together the highest and the lowest; all that is great in heaven, with all that is little and contemptible upon earth, in the person of this infant God! But what is the meaning of all this? What has brought this great God down to this stable, to this crib? Why has he thus debased, and perfectly annihilated himself? O, my soul, it is for thy sake: it is for the love of thee: it is to redeem thee, and deliver thee from sin and hell: it is to give thee an example of all virtue: it is to draw thy heart to himself, and to engage thee to love him.

Consider 2dly, and study well the great lessons which the Son of God desires to teach thee from the crib. Learn to be humble, by the contemplation of his unparalleled humiliations, which he here so joyfully embraces for thy sake: learn to be poor in spirit, by the consideration of his voluntary poverty: learn mortification and self-denial, by the view of his sufferings, which are all of his own choice. Learn of him here to despise this cheating world, and all its empty shows, its painted toys, its childish amusements, and all the allurements of its sensual pleasures, which he, who is the wisdom of God, despises and condemns in his birth. But especially apply thyself to study well, and to learn from the contemplation of the Son of God in the crib, the infinite charity of God, his infinite love for thee, and the infinite enormity of sin, by which we continually rebel against this infinite charity. O, my soul, if thou couldst but penetrate with thy inward eyes into the heart of this thy infant God; what heavenly flames wouldst thou there discover of a more than seraphic love for thee? Thou wouldst there meet thyself in

the midst of the heart of thy Saviour, where he has so long ago given thee a place. O there thou wouldst effectually learn both to hate thy sins, and to love thy God.

Consider 3dly, the affections with which thou oughtest to accompany thy meditations, in the stable of Bethlehem; if thou desirest to entertain there in a proper manner thy new-born King and Saviour. Here thou must exercise thyself in acts of all the three divine or theological virtues; of a lively faith in this thy infant God, and all his sacred truths, which lie here concealed in this mystery of his incarnation and birth; and all the wonders of his almighty power, wisdom, and goodness, which he has here wrought for the love of us; and of all the treasures of heaven, which he here brings with him to communicate to our souls: of a most firm hope and confidence in his infinite power, mercy, and goodness, which he discovers to thee in this mystery: of a most ardent love for him, in return for all that love which he here shews thee. Then pour forth thy soul, in his presence, in acts of adoration, praise, and glory; in acts of thanksgiving for all he has done for thee, and for the whole world; in acts of oblation of thy whole being, and of all the powers of thy soul to his love and service: and make at his feet (who is come to be the great high priest of God and men) an humble confession of all thy sins, with a most hearty sorrow and contrition for having ever offended so good a God: craving mercy, pardon, and absolution of him, and through him, and firmly resolving upon a new life for the future.

Conclude to let this be thy daily exercise during this holy time of Christmas; and not to suffer any worldly entertainments or diversions to keep thee out of the company of thy Saviour; at least so far as to hinder thee from waiting often on him, and spending a competent part of thy time with him, in proper meditations and affections. If thou art at a loss to know how thou oughtest to entertain thyself with

him, beg of him to teach thee: for he comes to be thy teacher. And if thou art sensible of the meanness of thy own performances, in point of adoration, praise, glory, thanksgiving, &c. offer up to the eternal Father, the adoration, praise, glory, and thanksgiving, of this thy new-born Saviour, to supply thy defects.

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On St. Stephen.

Dec. 26. **C**ONSIDER first, that St. Stephen was the first martyr; that is, the first who bore witness to the divinity of Jesus-Christ: by laying down his life for him: the first who after the death and passion of the Son of God returned him blood for blood, life for life: the first that was so happy as to be made a victim of divine love, a holocaust of sweet savour in the sight of God: in fine, the first that washed his robes by martyrdom in the blood of the Lamb, and is now at the head of his heavenly train, who stand *before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: where he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell over them: and they shall no more hunger nor thirst, neither shall the sun fall on them, nor any heat: for the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall rule them, and shall lead them to the living fountains of waters, &c. Apoc. vii. 15, &c.* O, my soul, what a glory, what a happiness is it, to lay down life itself for divine love! But, alas! how far are the generality of Christians from this perfection of charity, who are so unwilling to suffer, even the least incommo-  
dities, for the sake of their heavenly lover? And is not this our case too? O let us love at least these generous lovers of our God: let us conceive a holy envy for their happiness, by sighing and praying for a share in their charity and love.

Consider 2dly, the character that is given to St. Stephen by the Spirit of God. He was *a man full of faith, and of the Holy Ghost, Acts vi. 5. He was full of grace and fortitude, and did great wonders and*

*miracles among the people, ver. 8. By his zeal, the word of the Lord increased, and the number of the disciples was multiplied in Jerusalem exceedingly, ver. 7. And though many adversaries rose up, who disputed against him, they were none of them able to resist the wisdom and the Spirit that spoke, ver. 10. And when he was hurried by them before the council, all that were there saw his face, as if it had been the face of an angel, ver. 15. His zeal for the faith of Christ, and the courage and constancy with which he maintained it before the council, was rewarded with a heavenly vision, in which he saw the glory of God, and the Lord Jesus standing at the right hand of God, Acts vii. 55. And his bearing testimony to this truth, drew on his martyrdom: for presently casting him forth out of the city they stoned him; invoking the Lord, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. And falling on his knees, he cried with a loud voice, saying: Lord lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep in the Lord, Acts viii. 57, 58, 59. Christians, what admirable lessons and examples have we here of all virtues, in an heroic degree, in the life and death of this glorious saint? He was full of faith: he was full of the Holy Ghost, and his gifts: he was full of grace: he was full of fortitude: he was full of zeal: he was full of heavenly wisdom: he was full of divine charity: in a word, he was full of God, and of all good. O how happy shall we be, if we seriously endeavour to walk in the footsteps of this great saint, by an imitation of these his virtues!*

Consider 3dly, that as amongst the virtues of St. Stephen, none was more remarkable than his charity; so none more pressingly calls for our imitation. Charity has two branches, the love of God, and the love of our neighbours: the love of God, with our whole heart, and with our whole soul; and the love of our neighbours as ourselves. This love of God is exercised by seeking, and by promoting, in all things, the glory of God; by sanctifying his name, both by

word and work; by labouring to propagate his kingdom; by a perpetual conformity of our will to his will, and a perpetual dedication of our whole selves to his divine service. Thus did St. Stephen continually exercise himself in the most perfect acts of the love of God: not by the bare profession of the tongue, but by work and in truth. In like manner the love of our neighbours is exercised, by seeking and promoting their true and everlasting welfare, upon all occasions; by withdrawing them from the error of their way, and from the broad road that leads to perdition; and bringing them to God and to his grace: thus also did St. Stephen continually exercise himself in the most perfect acts of the love of his neighbours, by his preaching and by his prayers; by his zeal for the salvation of their souls; and by his sparing no pains to bring them to Christ; though this his charity cost him his life. Now, *greater love than this no man hath, that a man should lay down his life for his friends,* John xv. 13. But the most difficult point of all in the line of charity, as it regards our neighbours, is the love of our enemies: of which St. Stephen has given us a most glorious example in his last dying prayer for them, that were actually stoning him. *Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.*

Conclude to honour this great Saint, by diligently imitating his love for his God, his zeal for his glory, and for the salvation of souls, his fortitude and constancy in his sufferings, and his charity for his enemies: and to this end beg the assistance of his prayers.

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*On St. John the Apostle and Evangelist.*

Dec. 27. **C**ONSIDER first, upon how many accounts we ought to honour St. John, the beloved disciple of the Son of God; and to glorify God in him, for his extraordinary gifts and graces bestowed upon him. He was called in his

youth, whilst he was as yet innocent and pure, to follow our Lord Jesus; and he readily obeyed the call, and left both his parents and all things else for the sake of Christ. His zeal and fortitude in the cause of his master, procured him the name of *Boanerges*, or *a son of thunder*. The purity of his soul and body made him a special favourite of his Lord; who therefore admitted him to lean upon his bosom, at his last supper, and to draw from that sacred fountain of life, the heavenly waters of grace and truth; and on the following day, when he was dying upon the cross, he recommended his Virgin Mother to his care, that she might be his mother, and he might be her son. O blessed saint, great favourite both of Jesus and Mary, introduce us also, by the interest thou hast now in heaven, into some share in their favour; by procuring for us, by thy prayers, the grace to imitate thy purity.

Consider 2dly, to what a height St. John was raised by divine grace. He was made an *apostle*; and one of the chiefest of the *apostles*; even one of the three that were chosen by our Lord to be witnesses both of his glory on Mount Thabor, and of his anguish and agony on Mount Oliver. He was also an *Evangelist*, or writer of the Gospel, (which none of the other apostles were, except St. Matthew) and amongst the four evangelists, is compared to the *eagle*, (which flies high, and looks upon the sun with a steadfast eye) because of his sublime beginning, by taking his first flight up to the eternal Word, by whom all things were made; and his following, throughout his whole gospel, the same sublime course, with his eye still fixed on this great Sun of Justice, and the immense light of his divinity. St. John was also a *martyr*, by drinking of the chalice of his Lord, (as he had foretold him) by a long course of sufferings; and by being at length sentenced to death by the tyrant Domitian, and cast into a vessel of boiling oil; from whence he was de-

livered by an evident miracle. In sipe he was a *prophet*, to whom our Lord revealed an infinity of heavenly secrets and mysteries relating to latter times; which we find recorded in his Apocalypse, written during his banishment in the isle of Patmos. See then, my soul, how many titles this great saint has to our veneration. But remember at the same time, that the veneration which will please him best, will be a love and imitation of his virtues.

Consider 3dly, that the writings of St. John recommend nothing so much as charity and verity, love and truth. These they continually inculcate: charity, *because God is charity*: he is all love: he has died for love: *let us therefore love God*, saith he, *because God first hath loved us*. But then this, saith he, is the love of God, this is the charity we owe him, to keep his commandments. And this commandment we have from God, (the favourite commandment indeed of the Son of God) that we should love one another. This love for one another all his epistles are full of; this sweet odour they all breathe; with this they join *verity or truth, loving in truth, walking in truth, for the sake of the truth, which abideth in us, and shall be with us for ever*. And what is this truth but the Son of God himself, *the way, the truth, and the life*? Such was always the doctrine of St. John: this he perpetually preached, both by word and writing: such was the spirit of this disciple of love.

Conclude to embrace, with all thy soul, this *charity and verity*, this *love and truth*, so much recommended by St. John; or rather by the Spirit of God; through him. Stick close to this charity and verity here, and it will abide with thee for ever hereafter, and will make thee happy for endless ages.



*On the holy Innocents.*

Dec. 28. **C**ONSIDER first, that the Son of God, who was born into this world to be the Saviour of the world, was no sooner born, but he began to be persecuted by the children of this world. The wicked king Herod, to secure to himself and his family the temporal kingdom of Judea, seeks the life of this new-born King; of whose birth he had been informed by the sages of the East: and in order to compass his impious design, employs both craft, and (when this was eluded) open violence, by the barbarous massacre of the Innocents. But all to no other purpose than to show, how vain are the designs and efforts of men against the decrees of God; according to that of the wise man, (*Prov. xxi. 30.*) *There is no wisdom, there is no prudence, there is no counsel against the Lord.* Our new-born Saviour, by divine admonition, was carried away to Egypt, out of the reach of the tyrant; and all his barbarity only served to render the birth of the Messiah more illustrious, by spreading the fame of it through all the world, and to crown at the same time so many innocent martyrs; whilst, for his own part, it brought a perpetual odium upon his infamous memory, which no length of time can ever efface; and drew down most terrible judgments (within the compass of a year) upon his head: and as to his numerous family, for which he was so solicitous, they quickly lost the kingdom, and were in a short time totally extirpated. O see, Christians, how sad a thing it is, wilfully to fight against our Saviour by known sin, and how dismal the consequences are of all such undertakings.

Consider 2dly, what we read, *Matt. ii. 16, &c.* *Then Herod perceiving that he was deluded by the wise men, was exceeding angry: and sending killed all the men-children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the borders thereof from two years old and under.*

These, my soul, are the *holy Innocents*, whose feast we celebrate this day; as happy martyrs, bearing testimony, not by their words, but by their blood, to the birth of the Son of God. These were his first victims, immolated as so many lambs, to illustrate the coming of the Lamb of God, born into this world, to take away the sins of the world. These are the first flowers of the martyrs, cropt in the very bud by the impious persecutor of Christ: these are the first fruits, produced by the coming of our Lord, and presented by him to his Father: to be followed afterwards by that abundant harvest; out of all nations, of innumerable glorious champions of Christ, who should maintain his cause by the testimony of their blood. To these the church applies, in the lesson of this day, that of Apoc. xiv. 4, 5. *These are they, who were not defiled with women: for they are virgins. These follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were purchased from among men, the first fruits to God, and to the Lamb: and in their mouth there was found no lie: for they are without spot before the throne of God.* O let us honour these first martyrs of the Son of God!

Consider 3dly, that purity, innocence, and temporal sufferings, are by divine appointment the way to eternal happiness. By this road, the *holy Innocents* arrived thither: O how happy are all they that are walking in this road! See, then, Christians, how greatly you are deceived, in flying so much from sufferings, since these are to bring you to your God. There was lamentation, and great mourning in Bethlehem, of the mothers of the *holy Innocents*; they were not to be comforted, because they had lost their children. In the mean time, there was great joy in heaven, for their happy transmigration to a better region of endless bliss. Thus where the world is sorrowful, heaven rejoices: because the sufferings of this short time, produce for the sufferers an eternal weight of glory in that blessed kingdom: whereas they that are

without sufferings, are in danger of never coming thither.

Conclude to embrace whatsoever share may be appointed for thee in the sufferings of this life, as designed by divine Providence to help thee to heaven. Assure thyself that thy God knows what is best for thee; and that he sends thee, what he knows to be the best. Had not the Innocents been brought to God by the means of their sufferings, they might have lived to have crucified their Lord; and instead of being eternally happy, might have been eternally miserable.

*On the Gospel of the good Shepherd, (John x.) read on the Feast of St. Thomas of Canterbury.*

Dec. 29. **C**ONSIDER first, that the Son of God, by his incarnation and birth, did not only come amongst us, to be our Father, and to be our Head; our king, our priest, and our sacrifice; our brother, and our friend; our physician, and our advocate, &c. but also recommends himself to us in this gospel under the amiable quality of the good shepherd, and pastor of our souls. *I am the good shepherd, (saith he ver. 11.) the good shepherd giveth his life for his sheep. But the hireling, and he that is not the shepherd, who is not the owner of the sheep, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and runneth away, and the wolf catcheth, and scattereth the sheep: but the hireling runneth away, because he is a hireling; and he hath no concern for the sheep. I am the good shepherd: and I know mine, and mine know me. As the Father knoweth me, and I know the Father: and I lay down my life for my sheep, &c.* O Christians, how happy are we in such a shepherd; so great, so good, so loving, so careful of our true welfare! O he is the good shepherd indeed, that came down from heaven, to seek the poor sheep that was lost; and when he had found it, took it upon his own shoulders, to car-

ry it home, with joy, to his heavenly fold! *Luke xv.* O how dearly have his sheep cost him! O how truly has he made good in himself that sentence, that *the good shepherd giveth his life for his sheep!* O let us ever embrace and love, follow and obey, this true shepherd of our souls.

Consider 2dly, how many ways this heavenly shepherd is daily providing for all the necessities of his sheep, and the tender affection he perpetually shews them. *The Lord ruleth me,* (or as it is in the original, *is my shepherd*) saith the psalmist, (*Ps. xxii.*) *and I shall want nothing: He hath set me in a place of pasture.* Yes, Christians, he hath placed our souls here in the midst of the rich pastures of his divine word and sacraments, in the communion of his church. He hath brought us up by the streams of the living waters of his grace, which are ever flowing to refresh and nourish us. He conducts us to the paths of justice; he converts our souls; he is with us, even when we are walking in the midst of the shadow of death: his rod and his staff still comfort and support us. But O give ear, my soul, to what follows in the same psalm: *Thou hast prepared a table before me, against them that afflict me. Thou hast anointed my head with oil, and my chalice which inebriateth me, how goodly is it!* Here are benefits indeed of this divine Pastor of our souls: he has prepared a table for us, in which he feeds his sheep with his own most sacred body and blood: he anoints our heads with the divine oil of his holy spirit: and he inebriates us with the goodly chalice of his passion, continually offered up on our altars; to be a plentiful source to us of all heavenly grace. And in consequence of all these favours, already bestowed on us, he encourages us to conclude with the royal prophet, that *his mercy will follow us all the days of our life; and that we shall dwell in the house of the Lord unto length of days, even to a happy eternity.*

Consider 3dly, what we owe, in quality of the

sheep of Christ, to this divine shepherd. He tells us, (*John* x. 3, 4, 5.) that his sheep *hear the voice* of their shepherd : that *he calleth his own sheep by name and leadeth them out* : that *he goeth before them* ; and that *the sheep follow him, because they know his voice* : but a stranger they follow not, but fly from him, because they know not the voice of strangers. And again, (ver. 27, 28.) *My sheep hear my voice : and I know them ; and they follow me. And I give them eternal life ; and they shall not perish for ever ; and no man shall snatch them out of my hand.* Christians, do we stick close to this heavenly shepherd ? Do we follow him both by our faith, and by our life ? Do we know him, and hear his voice ? Do we fly from strangers, the world, and the flesh, and the devil ? If so, we are his sheep indeed ; and if we persevere, he will bring us, in spite of the world, the flesh, and the devil, to the pastures of eternal life. But if we run away from our shepherd to follow these strangers, we must expect to fall a prey to the wolves.

Conclude to embrace your divine Saviour, under this amiable character of the Pastor and Shepherd of your souls : and as nothing has been wanting on his side, to fulfil, in the utmost perfection, even beyond all expression and imagination, every part of the character of the *good shepherd* ; see nothing be wanting, on your side, to fulfil, by a perpetual correspondence with his grace, every part of the character of *good sheep*.

*On the Conclusion of the Year.*

Dec. 30. **C**ONSIDER first, that the year is now come to a conclusion : it is just upon the point of expiring : all these twelve months, that are now past, have flowed away into the gulph of eternity : they are now no more : they shall return to us no more. All our years pass in this manner : they all hasten away one after another, and hurry us

along with them, till they bring us also into an endless, unchangeable eternity. Our years will all be soon over: we shall find ourselves at the end of our lives much sooner than we imagine. O let us not then set our hearts upon any of these transitory things: let us despise all that passes away with this short life, and learn to adhere to God alone, who never passes away, because he is eternal. Let us always be prepared for our departure hence.

Consider 2dly, that as the year is now past and gone, so are all the pleasures of it, all our diversions, all our amusements, in which we have spent our time this year, are now no more: the remembrance of them is but like that of a dream. O such is the condition of all things that pass with time! Why then do we set our esteem or affection upon any of them? Why are we not practically and feelingly convinced of the emptiness and vanity of them all, and that nothing deserves our love, or attention, but God and eternity? And as the pleasures of the year are all past, so are all the displeasures and uneasinesses, pains and mortifications of it: they are also now no more than like a dream: and so will all temporal evils appear to us, a little while hence; when we shall see ourselves upon the brink of eternity. Let us learn then only to fear those evils, which will have no end! and the evil of sin, which leads to those never ending evils.

Consider 3dly, how you have spent your time this year. It was all given you by your Creator, in order to bring you forward to him, and to a happy eternity. O how many favours and blessings have you received from him every day of the year! How many graces and invitations to good! And what use have you made of all these favours? What virtue have you acquired this year? What vice have you rooted out? What passions have you overcome? Have you made any improvement at all in virtue,

since the beginning of the year? Instead of going forwards to God, have you not rather gone backward? Alas! what an account shall you have to give one day for all this precious time, and for all these graces and blessings, spiritual or corporal, which you have so ungratefully abused and perverted during the course of this year? Then as to your sins, whether of omission or commission against God, your neighbours, or yourselves; which you have been guilty of this year, either by thought, word, or deed; what a dreadful scene will open itself to your eyes, upon a little examination! And how little have you done during the course of this year, to cancel them by penance! O how melancholy would your case be, if your eternal lot were to be determined by your performances of this past year!

Conclude by giving thanks to God for all his blessings of this year; and especially for his patience and forbearance with you in your sins. Return now at least to him with your whole heart; begging mercy and pardon for all the sins of the year, and for all the sins of your life. And resolve with God's grace, if he is pleased to give you another year, to spend it in such a manner as to secure to your souls the never ending year of a happy eternity.

*On the Gospel of girding the Loins, &c. (Luke xii. 35, &c.) read from St. Silvester.*

Dec. 31. **C**ONSIDER first, those words of our Lord to his disciples, and in them, to all Christians: *Let your loins be girt, and lamps burning in your hands; and be you like to men, who wait for their Lord, when he shall return from the wedding: that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open to him immediately. Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord when he cometh shall find watching.* This

*girding of our loins*, and *having lamps burning in our hands*, are to be taken in a spiritual sense, and contain great and necessary lessons for every part of our lives. As we know not the hour, when our Lord will come to us, and knock at our door by death, we must keep ourselves always awake, and in a proper posture and readiness to open to him without delay, and to welcome him. Now this proper posture, and readiness to welcome our Lord, whensoever he shall come and knock, chiefly consists in these two things, in having *our loins always girt*, by a constant restraint of our irregular inclinations and lusts; and having *lamps always burning in our hands*, by the constant exercise of Christian virtues; which may shine forth to the glory of God, and the edification of our neighbours. And those servants are happy indeed, who are always waiting for the coming of their Lord, with their *loins girt* in this manner, and holding such lamps as these, always burning in their hands.

Consider 2dly, what follows in the same gospel, with regard to the immense reward of these same faithful servants. *Amen I say to you, that their Lord will gird himself, and make them sit down to meat, and passing will minister to them.* Christians, what an honour, what a happiness is here promised us; if our Lord at his coming, shall find us watching. *He will gird himself*, to be ready to wait upon us: *he will make us sit down to table*; and *he will pass and minister to us*. O what incomprehensible joys are here signified, by our Lord's *ministering to us*; by his making himself, as it were, over to us, to be perpetually enjoyed by us! O what a table is this, at which we shall be invited to sit down, to be eternally entertained by him, with all the delights of heaven; with the sweet fruits of the tree of life, and the delicious waters of the fountain of life! And lest we should be discouraged with the apprehension of our being excluded from this eternal banquet, because we have



already passed a good part of our lives, without being in that readiness, which our Lord expects at the time of his coming, he adds for our comfort, that *if he shall come in the second watch, or if he shall come in the third watch*; and shall then find us watching, we shall still be happy. *Blessed, saith he, are those servants.* So that, if we have hitherto been careless; if we have let the first, or even the second watch pass, without being upon our guard; and he has been so good as not to come and surprise us; let us now at least *awake*, let us *gird our loins now*, and *have our lamps*, for the future, *burning in our hands*: and we may still be *blessed*.

Consider 3dly, the remaining words of this gospel, *But this know ye*, saith our Lord, *that if the householder did know at what hour the thief would come, he would surely watch, and would not suffer his house to be broken open. Be you also ready: for at what hour you think not the Son of Man will come.* This is that great lesson, of *always watching*, which our Saviour perpetually inculcates, as our only security against the dreadful evil of an unprovided death, and all those endless evils, which are the unhappy consequences of an unprovided death. O let us lay up this lesson in our hearts; let us meditate daily upon it; let us conform ourselves to it in the practice of our lives. O let us always watch! Our Lord, who has borne with us all this year, has in the mean time knocked at the door of thousands of others, who this day twelvemonth, were as likely to live as ourselves. Their bodies are now corrupting in their graves: but O, where are their souls? And where shall our bodies, where shall our souls be, a twelvemonth hence? Let us then be always ready; because we know not the day, nor the hour, when our Lord shall come.

Conclude to observe well these evangelical prescriptions, of *girding your loins*, of *having your lamps*

*ever burning in your hands; and of being always waiting for your Lord, and always ready to open the door to him: and you shall not fail of being of the number of those happy servants, who shall enter into the eternal joy of their Lord.*



**N. B.** *The Catholic Public is respectfully informed that this Edition of CONSIDERATIONS UPON CHRISTIAN TRUTHS AND CHRISTIAN DUTIES, digested into Meditations for every Day in the Year, has been carefully printed from the corrected Copy used by the Venerable Author himself, with the Addition only of the Head-Lines at the Top of the Pages, denoting the Day of the Month or Week, and the Subject of Meditation.*

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